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Letters to the editor and comments from Q-Notes Online. Web comments are not edited for grammar or punctuation.

Bold legislation

Contrary to your editorial on the Healthy Youth Act (HYA) ("Compromise" bill leaves much to be desired," Editor's Note, May 2, 2009), I believe firmly that it *will* directly improve the quality of life for LGBT and questioning teens.

Currently, only a handful of school districts in North Carolina offer comprehensive sex-ed. When HYA passes, over 115 school districts (all of them) will be required to offer comprehensive sex-ed along with abstinence-only education. Hundreds of thousands of teens in our state will receive medically accurate information about contraception, safe sex, disease prevention and valuable skills to protect themselves. Just because we haven't totally removed references to marriage and abstinence from the statute doesn't mean the LGBT youth will be invisible in the new law. In fact, the HYA may be the single best chance LGBT youth have to start a dialogue in their schools about their sexual health.

No bill is perfect — but perfect bills do not pass. We all know this. HYA is more than a great start. It is solid, impressive and bold legislation that we should all be proud of.

— Sean Kosofsky, Raleigh, N.C., letter
[Ed. Note — Kosofsky is executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice NC, one of several coalition partners pushing for the Healthy Youth Act.

Cause for celebration

Your recent Editor's Note, "Compromise" bill leaves much to be desired" (May 2, 2009), is absolutely correct that the ideal would be for every North Carolina student to have access to comprehensive, science-based sexuality education. But you get it wrong when you suggest that that Equality NC and other advocates should not support the version of the Healthy Youth Act that recently passed the NC House and is pending in the Senate.

This bill will put comprehensive sexuality education in every middle and high school in the state, and allow parents to choose that, the current abstinence-only program, or no sex education at all. The latter two choices are available today, but the comprehensive programs that work are not available in most of our schools.

We, our coalition partners, and the bill sponsors deliberated thoughtfully over exactly which changes we would accept — and which we wouldn't — in order to get a majority and fend off more dangerous amendments. Those were tough decisions.

But, in the end, the decision to support the House version of the bill was easy.

It came down to this question: do we make some compromises to get life-saving, medically accurate, non-discriminatory sex education to thousands of students who are stuck in failed abstinence-only programs now? Or, do we insist on getting all that we want and just

hope that somehow those students manage to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy in the extra years it would take to pass that perfect bill?

I chose protecting the health of thousands of our young people, and I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

This isn't "one step forward and two steps back" as your column asserts. It's one huge step forward for NC students, including the LGBT students who have been especially left behind by the existing curriculum. With passage of this bill, students in the 103 school systems that now teach just abstinence-only will have the choice of comprehensive sex education. Our research indicates that at least three out of four parents are likely to choose comprehensive.

Our work to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases didn't start with this bill and it won't end with this bill. But if and when this bill passes the Senate and is signed by Governor Perdue, it will be a cause for celebration.

— Ian Palmquist, Raleigh, N.C., letter
[Ed. Note — Palmquist is executive director of Equality NC, one of several coalition partners pushing for the Healthy Youth Act.

Elevation Church

The many openly gay and lesbian members of this church need to run as fast as they can!! They should go to a church where the true love of Christ is taught and to an affirming and welcoming congregation. I believe

there is a Revolution Church in the Charlotte area, there are also a number of Baptist Churches in Charlotte which are welcoming and affirming as well as two MCC churches. I personally prefer the Baptist faith. Myers Park Baptist is a very progressive and welcoming church in Charlotte.

— Wade, May 8, web

Anti-bullying bill

"Goodall said he voted against the anti-bullying bill solely due to public perception." Let me translate this: He is afraid of losing his job. If he is truly sincere in his statement that he is "...very much in favor of stopping bullying of gays and lesbians..." then he should have no trouble supporting this bill.

— FemmieGirl, May 6, web

It is sad, however, it is sadder that we too often limit ourselves to the term "bullying" when bullying only represent part of a continuum of aggression. It is only when we consider the entire continuum that we can identify an individual's (any individuals regardless of age, gender, culture, education or hierarchy) emerging aggression, which research has shown as the only effective means to identify a shooter, suicide or otherwise. If you would like to know more, let me encourage you to read a new free white paper, which outline the problems in our schools and a possible real solution. We can and must prevent these events, not merely react to them.

— John Byrnes, May 6, web

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