

*The mission of the HIV Planning Council is to develop and coordinate an effective and comprehensive community-wide response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.*

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Date: 12/3/2018

To:

Geronimo Rodriguez, President of the Board of Trustees, Austin ISD

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From: HIV Planning Council

The Planning Council supports implementation of comprehensive sexual health education for 3rd-8th grade students. Adopting a more comprehensive curriculum aligned with expert recommendations will benefit our community through improved health and safety of children as well as a reduction in teen pregnancy. In particular, we would like to speak to the risk of HIV infection to youth and young adults as well as the importance of education in reducing stigma around the topics of sexual health and reducing new HIV infections.

The HIV Planning Council allocates over five million dollars annually for services provided to people living with HIV in the Austin area. We believe that by adopting comprehensive sexual education AISD can assist us in the fight against HIV by growing the knowledge and understanding of children and youth in our community.

The 2017 Austin Area HIV Needs Assessment showed that youth and young adults are more likely to be diagnosed with HIV—people aged 13-34 accounted for 61% of new HIV diagnoses in 2016. Comprehensive sex education provides children and teens with the information they need to take charge of their health and make safer lifelong decisions.

Additionally, Austin committed to end the HIV epidemic by 2030 through the Fast-Track Cities/Getting to Zero international initiative which locally is a collaboration of organizations across our community including the HIV Planning Council. A key focus of this initiative involves reducing stigma which commonly prevents timely and effective diagnosis and treatment of HIV. Comprehensive sex education provides lessons in diversity which allows AISD to set a tone that reduces bullying and fosters a more accepting culture that will improve mental health and increase the likelihood that young adults will access care they need when they need it to prevent the spread of HIV.

Justin Smith

Chair of the HIV Planning Council