



PENNSYLVANIA PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of the Pennsylvania Principals Association

Before the Pennsylvania House Children and Youth Committee
Concerning House Bill 460 of 2025

June 3, 2025

Chairpersons McNeill and Klunk and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Principals Association, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 460. While I would rather present this testimony in person today, our Association is hosting an event in Philadelphia with educational leaders from across the nation. Unfortunately, I am not able to excuse myself as I am leading that event. I trust that my written testimony will suffice and provide the necessary background for this committee to make a decision on House Bill 460.

The Pennsylvania Principals Association represents more than 3,200 public and private school principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders across the Commonwealth. We appreciate this committee's focus on student well-being and recognize the intent of HB 460 to provide critical instruction around child abuse awareness and prevention.

I. Acknowledgment of Legislative Intent

Fighting to end child abuse, or any actions that harm children physically or emotionally, is something all educators should champion. Clearly, we agree with the intent of this legislation. However, after a thorough review of the legislation and based on direct feedback from our members across Pennsylvania, the committee should proceed cautiously, considering not only the end result we seek, but also the process that is used in an attempt to achieve that end result. Our neutral stance on this bill stems from the fact that we believe the process outlined in HB 460 to be flawed. In other words, good intent must be matched with effective, realistic, and supported implementation. Without this, we risk creating a mandate that overwhelms schools and diminishes instructional quality without achieving its intended impact.

We offer the following comments and recommendations. As the saying goes, "the devil is in the details," and our members raise substantive implementation concerns that merit careful consideration. The following includes thoughts and quotes from members of our Legislative Committee, representing elementary, middle and high school administrators from all areas of our state.

II. Key Concerns from School Leaders

1. Instructional Overload and Time Constraints

Educators are tasked with delivering an expanding array of mandates—including mental health education, career readiness, financial literacy, and more—all within a limited instructional window.

The cumulative burden of these requirements is eroding the time available for deep, meaningful instruction. HB 460, in its current form, adds to this already unsustainable workload. One member of our committee who is a junior/senior high school principal from the northern tier stated, "Every year we are asked to do more—financial literacy, computer science, career readiness artifacts, mental health awareness, suicide prevention, vaping awareness, and the list continues. Meanwhile, we never get more time to do anything. While many of these are important, the cumulative effect is an unsustainable burden on instructional time (which we are then held accountable for). HB 460 only adds to that."

2. Unfunded Mandate

The bill does not currently include funding for curriculum development, staff training, or program implementation. This is of particular concern to smaller and under-resourced districts that are already struggling to meet state mandates with limited capacity. A high school principal from the center of our state reiterated this concern by stating, "smaller or underfunded districts may face greater challenges ... compared to wealthier districts." With a topic as important as this, we should not place such a burden on districts that could potentially result in some districts not being able to sustain this requirement.

3. Lack of Clear Implementation Guidance

We believe HB 460 lacks clarity on several critical elements, including:

- Frequency of delivery
- Personnel responsible for instruction
- Definitions of "age-appropriate" content
- Approved materials or programs

Vague mandates invite inconsistent implementation and increase the risk of legal and political complications. As an elementary administrator from Northwest Pennsylvania so accurately described, "As it stands now, the bill requires schools to develop and deliver an age-appropriate child abuse awareness and prevention program for all students in grades K-12. However, it provides no clear structure, instructional framework, or timeline for how this is to be effectively integrated into the existing curriculum. Child abuse awareness is an incredibly sensitive and complex topic. Without detailed guidance on developmentally appropriate content, delivery strategies, and protocols for responding to student disclosures, we risk creating inconsistent, incomplete, or even harmful learning experiences for students."

A rural secondary principal commented, "A topic of this importance deserves more than a box-checking approach; it requires meaningful time, training, and space within the curriculum."

4. Insufficient Educator Training

Many members of our committee conveyed deep concern about the training that would take place and who would deliver instruction. Teaching about child abuse requires trauma-informed expertise. Current training offerings are minimal and insufficient for this level of responsibility. Simply extending Act 126 training is not adequate. With such an emphasis placed in our schools on trauma-informed practices and multi-tiered systems of support, it led one elementary administrator to comment: "Without a trauma-informed, research-based approach and

comprehensive support systems, we risk retraumatizing students or leaving staff unprepared to respond appropriately.”

5. Parental Communication and Transparency

The bill does not outline how parents will be notified, how they may preview content, or whether they can opt their child out. In today’s climate, we realize the importance parents play in the education of their children. We have noticed, first-hand, what happens when parents perceive that they are being excluded from this opportunity. Thus, proactive, standardized parent communication is essential.

III. Recommendations for Improvement

If the Committee elects to advance HB 460, we respectfully suggest the following refinements:

1. Flexibility on the delivery, frequency and appropriateness of such a curriculum. Each school district should be granted this flexibility in a manner that reflects the needs of the community, the limitations of adequately trained personnel, and the impact this training will have on the students it intends to help.
2. State-Endorsed Curriculum Options: Direct PDE to provide a vetted menu of evidence-based programs for district use. There is never a “one-size-fits-all” approach that works when delivering sensitive content. A curriculum that is age-appropriate and culturally sensitive is essential.
3. Expanded and Funded Professional Development: Allocate resources for robust, incentivized training for educators tasked with delivering this sensitive content.
4. Standardized Parent Communication Materials: Require PDE to create fact sheets, letters, and opt-out forms for use by districts.
5. Curricular Realignment: Explore reductions in outdated or duplicative mandates—such as state testing and overlapping health requirements—to make space for meaningful new initiatives.

IV. Conclusion

The Pennsylvania Principals Association reiterates its strong support for efforts to protect children and educate them about abuse prevention. HB 460 contains the foundation for a meaningful program, but it requires structural improvement to be successful. We respectfully request that lawmakers work collaboratively with educators, families, and subject-matter experts to develop a comprehensive and sustainable path forward. The Pennsylvania Principals Association stands ready to assist in any way possible.

We appreciate your commitment to Pennsylvania’s students and thank you for considering the perspectives of the Commonwealth’s school leaders.

Respectfully submitted,
Pennsylvania Principals Association
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