



Texans Standing Tall

Together creating healthier
and safer communities.

Senate Committee on Education
Testimony: SB 1344

April ~~13~~¹⁴, 2009

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing regarding SB1344 and its companion HB3916 that would require amending the Education Code to address binge drinking and alcohol poisoning through the use of evidence-based prevention programs. Please accept this document as written testimony on this issue.

I am Nicole Holt, executive director of Texans Standing Tall, the statewide coalition to make alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs irrelevant in the lives of youth. We work with community coalitions around the state to implement evidence-based prevention strategies.

This issue is an urgent one – girls now out-drink boys in grades 7-12. They are also getting in more trouble than ever before while under the influence of alcohol. Additionally, in the age of “super-sized” foods, binge drinking is how kids drink. We have members whose children have died of alcohol poisoning even though they rarely, if ever, drank previously. We need to employ every tool available to us to prevent youth alcohol use.

It is clear that the author of this language is familiar with the research in the field and how critical it is to utilize evidence-based prevention to prevent and delay alcohol use. Our organization could not be more pleased that a requirement to utilize evidence-based prevention programs is being considered. Research has shown that scare tactics and other educational prevention programs often have the opposite effect, resulting in a greater propensity for a young person to experiment with alcohol. It is essential that we utilize strategies and programs that are proven to work.

My first recommendation is a clarification of where to obtain evidence-based program information. It has been my experience working in communities across the state that many people do not know where to find evidence-based prevention programs and strategies and/or they believe that because they have completed a pre and post test that demonstrated a favorable result that a program is evidence-based. Expanding the language to include specific organizations that offer evidence-based programs and strategies that have utilized valid and reliable evaluation measures would direct people to appropriate sources. I have provided suggested language in bold in the document included in this packet that identifies organizations such as the National Institute on

Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, U.S. Surgeons General, the Institute of Medicine and others. I believe such information in the code will aid all those involved.

My second recommendation is to add the words "and other substance" in the line "...and has been proven to effectively prevent or delay alcohol **and other substance** abuse among students." I encourage this inclusion because research demonstrates that kids do not use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs in silos nor do they engage in isolated risky behaviors. The addition of these words reflects this broader aspect of the risky activity and ultimately of the prevention solution.

I have spoken with the Texas Education Agency about my suggested changes and the reasons, and they were supportive. I have also provided my suggested changes to Representative Eissler's office for the companion bill.

Texans Standing Tall trains our coalition members throughout the state as well as communities to address youth alcohol use, binge drinking, and alcohol poisoning with evidence-based prevention strategies.

Should you desire additional information regarding evidence-based community prevention strategies or data on use trends, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Texans Standing Tall looks to the Institute of Medicine, Centers for Disease Control, Surgeons General, and other such reputable sources for recommended prevention strategies. I have included some materials from those organizations in your packet.

I have also included the *Texans Standing Tall Report Card 2008 on Youth Substance Abuse Issues: Research and Legislation*. The Report Card speaks specifically to our youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug trends in Texas as well as offers solutions.

Our advisory board includes Geronimo Rodriguez of Seton Family of Hospitals and Suzii Paynter of the Christian Life Commission. They can each speak to the credibility of this organization.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Nicole Holt
Executive Director
Texans Standing Tall