**Senate Education Committee**

**Testimony re. SB 1072**

**April 12, 2023**

Chair Creighton and Honorable Committee Members,

Healthy Futures of Texas is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan organization with a focus on improving adolescent health outcomes, especially as it relates to reducing high rates of unintended teen pregnancies in the state of Texas.

We strongly support transparency and parent engagement in the school setting, and work closely with districts to strengthen these processes. However, we have strong concerns that SB 1072 would harm students who reach out to trusted adults such as teachers, school counselors, or school nurses, including those who are seeking to disclose abuse.

As written in the bill, “matters of human sexuality” is a broad term encompassing a wide range of issues including medical care, healthy relationships, sexual abuse and assault, and abstinence. The broad reach of the bill goes beyond sex education curriculum and is likely to impact those who are tasked with keeping our children safe and healthy. For example, if a board has not yet adopted a policy or adopts an insufficient policy, a counselor or trusted teacher could be forbidden from offering guidance to a student who discloses that her boyfriend is trying to pressure her into having sex.

Additionally, the bill includes no exemption for the delivery of medical care, or counseling services. School nurses could be prohibited from performing essential job duties, including counseling on abstinence, STI prevention or exposure, or pregnancy prevention.

The bill does not provide sufficient time for these policies to be enacted. Charters are not currently required to have SHACs. These districts would first have to form a SHAC, adding months to the process. While most ISDs do have SHACs, they often do not meet over the summer. This could result in hundreds of districts beginning the school year without this policy in place, leaving school nurses, counselors and social workers unable to perform basic job functions.

The bill would also subject charter schools, including small charter districts that serve only elementary levels, to burdensome requirements in order to teach topics such as puberty instruction, abuse prevention, or other health topics.

While we support local control and SHAC involvement, we encourage the committee to consider the harmful impacts of this bill on the health and safety of Texas students.