

## Faith Communities Statement on Referendum 90

As people of faith and conscience, we hereby state our strong support for the approval of Referendum 90.

Caring for our bodies and relationships in loving and knowledgeable ways is consistent with the teachings of many faiths. Comprehensive sexuality education like what is required by approving R90 focuses on communication, consent, boundaries, decision-making, and abuse prevention, in addition to health care and prevention resources.

We believe that our children and youth need education about bodies and relationships that is both age appropriate and medically accurate, which too many schools and communities in Washington don't currently provide, leaving our young people at risk. Years of research have shown that youth who receive education about the components of healthy relationships and about how their bodies work are much less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, experience an unintended pregnancy or to contract a sexually transmitted infection. In addition, R90 will ensure teens have tools to help reduce physical, emotional and sexual abuse in relationships, which a third of US teens under age 18 experience from a partner. This vital education will help young people understand and respect personal boundaries and to exercise their right to consent or refuse participation in sexual activity.

Shame and stigma have no place in our public education system. It is time to guarantee that our young people receive the information, resources and skills they need to protect their health and build their future – without shame or judgment. All of our youth deserve education that is inclusive of LGBTQ identities and relationships, and which allows them to experience positive acceptance from teachers and other students. This type of education literally saves lives.

While some children and youth are fortunate enough to receive information about these topics from their families and in their faith communities, too many do not. R90 is fully consistent with the rights and freedoms of parents and communities, allowing parents to opt their children out of comprehensive sexuality education instruction while providing life-saving information for those who desperately need accurate and age-appropriate information to stay safe and healthy, and requiring local school boards to consult with their communities in designing their curriculum.

As people of faith and leaders of faith communities, we strongly believe in comprehensive sex education and sign this statement as our show of support to Approve R90.