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TO: House Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Committee

FROM: Lynn Hammond, Education Advocacy Specialist

SUBJECT: H.4757

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The League of Women Voters of SC (LWVSC) believes in the importance of parental rights and encourages partnerships between schools and parents. While the League supports parents' rights, some elements of H 4757 are concerning.

This bill, while attempting to provide for parents' rights and to accommodate the broad range of parental beliefs, creates additional work for classroom teachers, administrators, locally elected school board members, schools and districts and fails to acknowledge the efforts that schools are already making to work cooperatively with parents to resolve possible concerns. We believe that there are existing laws, regulations, policies and procedures that address provisions of this bill including the robust and inclusive curriculum and materials review and selection process, for all subjects, at the state and local level. In addition, parents are provided information about the courses and materials in a course syllabus which is provided to students at the beginning of the year or semester.

The requirement to notify parents of certain subject matter and receive permission from the parent for their student to participate (opt-in) in a selected portion of a class is problematic. A teacher may have 90-120 students per day and would need to receive affirmative permission from the parents of each student. The next section of the bill allows a parent to withdraw their child, or opt out, of specific instruction that they deem is harmful. While students are more likely to comply with the opt-out procedure than with the opt-in procedure, both options create costly administrative burdens for the school, which must assign staff and provide a safe supervised environment for any students who must be removed during an instructional period. This second section is also very broad as parents' beliefs about what may be harmful to their child could include beliefs about social studies, nutrition, the arts,-math, or science.

The requirement to provide 5-day notification prior to any instruction involving gender roles or stereotypes prohibits any spontaneous discussion of the roles of women and the role of gender in social studies and literature and offers multiple opportunities for frivolous complaints.

We would like to think that all parents act in the best interest of their children, but sadly we know that some parents put other issues ahead of their children's well-being. While such parents

are the exception, schools are aware of the need to protect vulnerable children and youth. Disrupting confidential relationships with trusted adults by requiring them to disclose sensitive information to parents, as required by this bill, could lead to harmful consequences for the student.

Schools seek to cooperate with parents and accommodate the needs of their students. We urge members of this subcommittee to take the time to meet with educators and school board members to learn how parental concerns are being handled now and how the procedures proposed in this bill would affect the public schools before taking any further action. The LWVSC respectfully ask that you not approve this bill in its current form.

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