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Eighth-Graders In Ohio Public School Allegedly Taught Marriage Prevents STDs

Sex ed in Ohio is not required to be medically accurate, according to the Guttmacher Institute.



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Staff Reporter, The Huffington Post



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WASHINGTON -- A representative for a faith-based pregnancy center told eighth-graders at a public school in Ohio factually inaccurate information about sexual health, including that marriage prevents sexually transmitted diseases, the American Atheists Legal Center said on Monday.

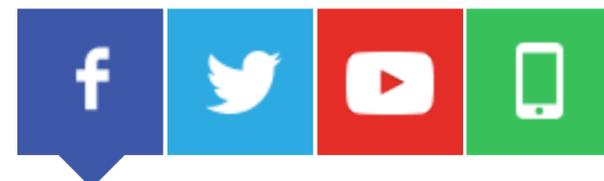
A representative for the Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County made an annual visit to a "Family and Consumer Science" class at Wooster High School around Oct. 28, according to a letter sent to the school district from the American Atheists and based on a parent complaint.

In addition to information about STDs, the representative allegedly told students that if a girl gets pregnant because of rape or incest, her only option is to put the baby up for adoption. (In fact, in Ohio, medical personnel are required to tell sexual assault victims about emergency

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contraception.)

The representative also reportedly told students they should not have children until they are married. A student who attended the class was "very confused and upset" by the information, so she confided to her mother, said Amanda Knief, legal and policy director for the American Atheists.

"The lecture was just a normal lecture, I didn't take offense to any of it," said another student at the school, who claimed to have heard the same speaker in a different class period. The student, who asked to remain anonymous in order to avoid disrupting their academic work, said the speaker discussed relationships and cons of teenage pregnancy, and said it is "possibly best to wait till marriage to have children," but that "it is our life and we can choose when the time comes."

The speaker did not bring up abortion, and addressed STDs in the context of "don't bounce around from partner to partner in a short periods of time having sexual intercourse and sexual contact," because that can result in certain diseases. The speaker did not suggest that marriage was a preventative tool, the student said.

When contacted by HuffPost, a spokeswoman for the the Pregnancy Care Center said she had not seen the letter. She did not respond to additional requests for follow-up comment. The center notes on its [website](#) that it has "taken the abstinence message into Wayne and Holmes County schools for decades" and that "Nearly 3000 students hear the abstinence message yearly, offering a factual and common sense approach to sexuality."

Superintendent Dr. Michael Tefs strongly denied the American Atheists' allegations in a statement from the Wooster City School District.

"We can speak with absolute certainty when we say these claims made by the American Atheists were not only false, but ridiculous," Tefs said. "I am bound to enforce every policy set forth by the board of education and I firmly believe our policies have been consulted, evaluated, upheld and deeply respected."

Tefs acknowledged that a presenter came in from Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County, but said that "the approved curriculum used by the presenter came from the Alliance for Healthy Youth in Akron, a non-profit, non-partisan organization."

"The speaker never referenced rape or incest and never discussed emergency contraception measures or adoption. Marriage was only used as a positive example of a relationship with a decreased risk of contracting STDs," he said.

The American Atheists told HuffPost that they, too, are waiting to receive an official response from the Wooster City School District. The student's mother, Melanie Wolf, who went on record after the story was published, said that she stands by what her child learned from the presentation.

"The information about STDs, pregnancy by sexual assault, and when to have kids that was presented to my child by a pregnancy crisis center in a family and consumer science class -- without my knowledge or consent -- goes against my values and beliefs," Wolf said in a statement to the atheist organization.

"The school district has no right to present misleading and inaccurate information to my child - - or any child," she added.

Wolf says she contacted the school to ask if a health care provider could address the class about



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STD prevention and alternatives to unwanted pregnancy, but an associate principal declined on the basis that such information would "not be presented to the students," the original letter claims.

It is not clear what other sexual health information, if any, the students received in the class. In Ohio, "venereal disease" curriculums are up to [local boards of education](#). The information provided is also not required to be medically accurate, according to the [Guttmacher Institute](#).

The American Atheists, along with Wolf and her child, want the school district to allow a non-faith-based health care provider to teach students about STD and pregnancy prevention. They also want the school district to stop allowing Pregnancy Care Center into official school classes "because of the inaccurate and religiously motivated curriculum," the letter says.

This story has been updated to include statements from the Wooster City School District, a second student who claims to have heard the same speaker and Melanie Wolf.

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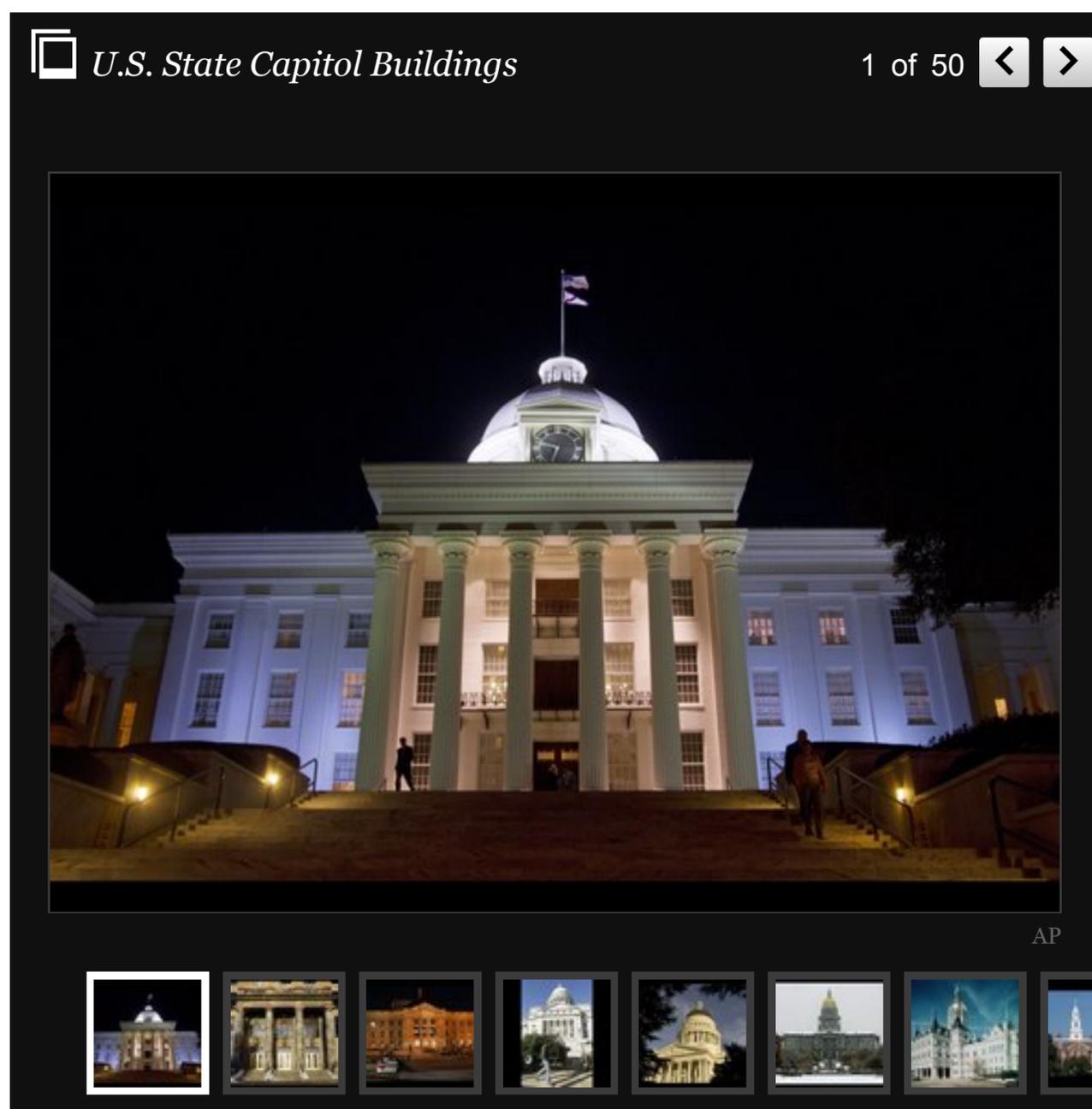
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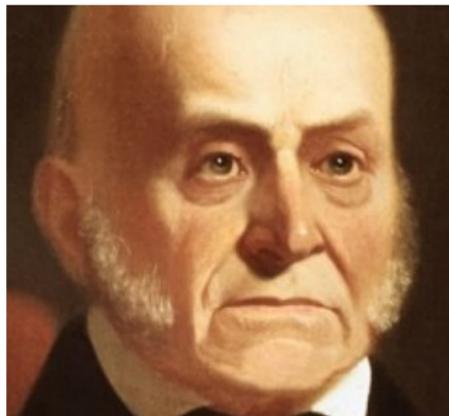
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