

Florida's obsession with banning the female body



Close-Up Of Woman Hand Holding Tampons

By Marla Noss

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Floridas republicans are cracking down hard on women's rights with an emerging bill on gender, sexuality, and diversity. Introduced by Republican State Representative Stan McClain, Bill 1069 just passed the House of Education with a vote of 13-5, which means if Gov. Ron DeSantis signs it, the law will take effect across Florida as of July 1, 2023.

Bill 1069, which is part of one of the latest in a series of bills expected to be signed by Florida’s Governor Ron DeSantis, who wants to remodel Florida’s educational system and avoid the “woke ideology” could mean a total regression in terms of sex education, feminism, and LGBTQ+ rights. With “woke ideology” DeSantis means progressive activism, like the critical race theory, but it seems like the next agenda is to normalize sexuality, gender, and the female body as taboo and shameful topics. House Bill 1069 would restrict teachers from using sex only as the definition according to the belonging birth gender, that teachers should not use different pronouns, and ban education about human sexuality, sexuality-transmitted diseases, and related topics until grade 6.

On 15th March, the House Education Quality Subcommittee discussed this bill, and the question came up of which way the bill would ban talking freely about the female cycle. According to this issue Ashley Gantt, a Member of the Florida House of Representatives since 2022, asked McCain: “So if little girls experience their menstrual cycle in fifth grade or fourth grade, will that prohibit conversations from them since they are in a grade lower than sixth grade?” He answered, “It would.” Talking about periods would become a taboo topic, again. The female cycle was a taboo topic for centuries, and over the last years the period become a more normal and natural topic, as it should be, so the bill would mean one step back in feminism, even in history.

Some call the bill “revolutionary” and some claim it’s “regression”. McCain intended the bill because he wants to bring uniformity to sex education and provide more pathways for parents to object books or other materials they find inappropriate for younger children. But is banning, hiding, and excluding information, about gender, and different sexualities helpful with sex education? Does it help the children? Or is it just even more confusing if they are not officially allowed to talk about their period?

Let's focus on facts, many studies show that girls get their period earlier nowadays. It is totally normal to get the period at 10 or 11, and those girls should not feel different, left alone or in any other way not normal, because menstruation is such a normal and natural biological process. This is also the reason why many parents are upset about the legislator's desire to control conversations in the classroom about their daughter's sex and period. “We don’t get do-overs with children, we don’t get that opportunity again,” Rep. Gantt said. “So why are we implementing or proposing policies to stop little girls from understanding their bodies?”

Under this bill not only the girls who get their period “earlier” would suffer but every child. Public Health professors from Montclair University Lisa Lieberman and Eva Goldfarb published in their research on school-based programs around the world the thesis that children as young as preschool age not only comprehend but can openly discuss subjects as varied as gender diversity, gender nonconformity, and gender-based oppression, making it the ideal time to begin creating a foundation for lifelong sexual health. Teaching about menstruation in younger classes would so provide a generally better understanding of the female body, for boys and girls. As Gantt said: “They’re going to be adults one day, and they need to be informed adults”.

“By openly discussing menstruation we are normalizing it and moving a step closer to making period poverty and stigma a thing of the past,” told Zion Issangya me. She is the Founder and Executive Director of Schoolgirl Essentials (SGE), an NGO in Tanzania, which works against the period poverty and stigma around the female body by visiting schools and providing knowledge and understanding as well as ensuring that female students are attending all their secondary school years uninterrupted. In Tanzania, and many other so-called “underdeveloped” countries the female cycle is an absolutely stereotyped and tabooed topic. In many societies, when girls and women are on their period, they are considered impure, irrational, and incapable so they are always excluded during this time of their circle. Zion Issangya, who founded SGE in 2014 and officially registered in July 2020, the goal is to ensure that: they completely end the stigma.



school girls essentials , girls holding reusable pads

This is why they include male students in the educational programs because as she said: “We believe that males in society are the ones that mainly perpetuate the stereotypes and so involving them in the subject at an early age means that we are creating a safer space for the topic to be well understood, openly talked about and especially because it is a natural biological topic, everyone should be informed about it.”

But the bill would mean restricting conversations about sexuality and health education, usually, the school is there to teach and talk with the kids, because maybe at home they are no place to talk about it, so abstinence-only education doesn’t make a lot of sense. Instead of banning education about periods in classrooms, they should talk about real systematic misogyny. Instead of less education, they should be more. Instead of hiding period, gender, and different sexuality from younger generations we should start talking with them openly, and teach them all about it. Keeping topics made uncomfortable by society in silence, hidden, or banned has never made them more comfortable.

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