



YELL 2012 (Youth Educating Legislators in Lansing)

On Tuesday, May 21, 2012, more than 30 high school peer educators from Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, Grand Rapids, Flint, Detroit, and Milan congregated in Lansing to discuss the value of a comprehensive sexuality education in Michigan schools and relay a sense of urgency to their legislators to support a comprehensive sexuality education program.

The high school students all work with Planned Parenthood to educate their peers and communities on contraception, HIV and STIs, abstinence, and healthy relationships and offer a safe and judge-free environment for students. These peer educators participate in 40 hours of training in sexual health and serve as contacts in their schools, giving information on sexual health topics and allowing other students to feel comfortable approach them with questions about sex.

While in Lansing, the students met with their state legislators to discuss the important work that they do every day in their communities and that providing young people with medically accurate, age appropriate comprehensive sexuality education encourages students to make health decisions about their bodies.

Representative John Olumba (Detroit) spoke with the students before their

lobbying appointments, speaking honestly about his first sexual encounters and how that led to his support for both practicing abstinence and access to comprehensive sex education. Representative Olumba eased the teenagers before their meetings as he normalized the often foreign and intimidating perception of state legislators.

Following their appointments, the students flooded the Capitol steps with pink and took a group photo in their Planned Parenthood T-shirts. The students ended the day with a trip to the gallery above the House floor to witness a House Session. The group of Peer Educators were both recognized and applauded by state representatives on the floor. The students left Lansing with increased confidence in their lobbying skills and the power of their voice in the political process. ■



SNAPSHOTS