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SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF CENTRAL CONNECTICUT

Condoms approved

Board of Ed OKs limited distribution at NBHS by year's end

By **ROBERT STORACE**
STAFF WRITER

NEW BRITAIN — The New Britain High School-based health

clinic will be distributing condoms to some students by the end of the year.

With Monday night's 5-3 Board

of Education vote to allow the distribution, only those students who are members of the health center will receive a free con-

dom, board Chairwoman Sharon Beloin-Saavedra said. Students must get their parents' permission

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to join the health center. But once they are center members they do not need their parents' permission to get a condom.

The vote by the school board followed 25 minutes of discussion on the policy, which was the subject of a recent online survey in which 63 percent of responding parents and half the students endorsed the idea.

In voting to allow the Community Health Center to distribute condoms at the school, Democratic board member Aram Ayalon said it was "the right thing to do."

"It's a shocking situation when

more than 50 girls a year get pregnant at New Britain High School," Ayalon said during the often-emotional discussion. At a recent workshop with high school students, Ayalon said it was revealed that many teen mothers "didn't use precautions because they didn't have the education or didn't ask their partners to use condoms."

Republican board member Paul Carver, who voted against the measure, said the board should be tackling more important issues.

"My issue is that it doesn't belong in the school system, when we have other issues that are more weighty," Carver said.

Beloin-Saavedra, a strong supporter of allowing the health center to distribute condoms, said the matter is more than just about condoms.

"We are addressing health care and barriers to education. Teenage pregnancy is a barrier to education," she said.

Prior to voting on the issue, the board heard from 13 residents — nine of whom expressed support for the plan.

Speaking for the majority of those who addressed the board, Paulette Fox, executive director of the Opportunities Industrialization Center of New Britain, said dating is not what it

used to be.

"Kids don't date anymore," Fox said. "It's sex, action and they are off. I am in favor of the distribution of condoms, with some education behind it."

Charles Mack, a pastor with New Life International Ministries, submitted a petition with what he said were upwards of 500 signatures of residents

opposed to the condom plan.

"How low will we lower our standards," Mack said. "I'm against this 100 percent."

There are 2,600 students at NBHS, and, according to the health center, 95 percent of them

are sexually active.

Voting to allow the distribution of condoms were Beloin-Saavedra, Ayalon, Democrats Carlos Pina and Judy Greco and Republican Erin Stewart. Voting against the plan were Republicans Carver, James Sanders Sr. and Anthony Kane. Democratic board members Dr. Nicole Sanders and Luisa Leal were

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ARAM AYALON
New Britain school board member

not present at the meeting, which was held in the high school's lecture hall.

Robert Storace can be reached at (860) 225-4601, ext. 223, or at rstorace@newbritainherald.com.