



Family Planning Advocates of NYS
17 Elk Street
Albany, New York 12207-1002
Phone: (518)436-8408
Fax: (518)436-0004
Website: www.fpaofnys.org
CONTACT: Susan Pedo
518.436.8408,x212

NEW YORK NEEDS REAL SEX EDUCATION
Society of Adolescent Medicine: Abstinence Only Doesn't Work
Spending on Failed Abstinence Only Programs Increased By \$1 Million in New York

Albany, NY (January 24, 2006)—Legislators, advocates and students from across New York State today called for passage of New York's **Healthy Teens Act** (A.6619-B, S.5121-B). This important legislation will provide resources to fund age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education for young people. Currently, New York has no designated funding stream for comprehensive sex education. Instead, the amount spent on failed abstinence-only sex education programs was increased by \$1 million last year – to \$13.2 million.

The most recent in a spate of scientific studies condemning abstinence-only programs was published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* this month. The report finds:

“Providing ‘abstinence only’ or ‘abstinence until marriage’ messages as a sole option for teenagers is flawed from scientific and medical ethics viewpoints.”

“Current funding for abstinence-only programs should be replaced with funding for programs that offer comprehensive, medically accurate sexuality education.”

New York's Healthy Teens Act would enable school districts, school-based health centers, BOCES and community organizations to apply for grants to develop and implement programs that provide students with medically accurate information and stress the value of abstinence while not ignoring those who have had sex. In New York, more than 4 out of every 10 students have had sex before they graduate from high school.

“This bill will reduce the number of teens who needlessly face unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections because they don't have the knowledge or resources to protect themselves,” said JoAnn Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State.

“The numbers on teen pregnancy are staggering,” said Assemblymember Richard Gottfried of Manhattan, sponsor of the bill. “As a parent and a grandparent, I believe the Healthy Teens Act will help New York's teens make the right decisions about their sexual activity.”

More than one million teenagers become pregnant each year in the United States. In 2003, New York's teen pregnancy rate was 63.3 per 1000 – nearly 40,000 young people aged 15-19 became pregnant that year.

“I believe it is critical for New York State to implement effective programs geared at curbing unintended teen pregnancies and reducing the number of cases of sexually transmitted disease,” said Senator Nick Spano of Westchester. “As the Senate sponsor of the Healthy Teens Act, I am confident that this legislation will go a long way in accomplishing both of these important goals.”

The Healthy Teens Act has more than 60 legislative sponsors – both Democrats and Republicans. More than 100 organizations and 12,000 individual New Yorkers have joined the effort to provide young people with real sex education by supporting the Get the Facts NY campaign (www.getthefactsny.org).

“Teens can't make good decisions if they don't have accurate information,” said Shaquana Gardner, a junior at the High School of Environmental Studies in New York City. “You don't have ANY choices if you don't even know your options.”