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ASSEMBLY PASSES HEALTHY TEENS ACT

Albany, NY (June 7, 2005)_The New York State Assembly today passed the Healthy Teens Act (A.6619b). This critical bill, authored by Assemblymember Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan), will provide resources to fund age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education.

“The Assembly has provided the leadership New York needs to give teens, teachers and families honest information that will help young people live healthy lives,” said JoAnn Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. “We are counting on the Senate to pass the Healthy Teens Act now. This bill will reduce the number of teens that needlessly face unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections because they don’t have the knowledge or resources to protect themselves.”

More than one million American teenagers become pregnant each year; the vast majority of these pregnancies are unintended and could be prevented. In New York, more than 4 out of every 10 young people have had sex before they graduate from high school. Rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (STI) in New York are among the highest in the country.

“The numbers on teen pregnancy are staggering,” said Assemblymember Richard Gottfried, sponsor of the bill and chair of the Assembly Committee on Health. “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.”

The Healthy Teens Act has 57 Assembly co-sponsors – both Democrats and Republicans. Senator Nicholas Spano (R-Westchester) has introduced the bill in the State Senate. More than 100 organizations and 9,000 individual New Yorkers have joined the effort to provide young people with real sex education by supporting the Get the Facts NY campaign.

The 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 real sex education. Schools would be able to develop curricula that best suit their students’ needs and:

- encourage family communication
- promote self-esteem and teach the skills needed to make responsible decisions about sex
- stress the value of abstinence while not ignoring those adolescents who have had sex
- provide medically accurate information about sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy prevention including information about contraceptives

More information about the need for sex education in New York is available at www.getthefactsny.org.