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HEALTHY TEENS ACT PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month Highlights Need for Real Sex Education in New York

Albany, NY (May 10, 2005)_The Healthy Teens Act was passed unanimously today by the New York State Assembly Health Committee. The bill (A.6619), authored by Assemblymember Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan), will create a competitive grant program to fund age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education.

“New York has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the nation,” said JoAnn Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. “The Healthy Teens Act will help to provide young people with the information they need to make healthy choices.”

More than 50 Members of the Assembly _ both Democrats and Republicans _ are co-sponsoring the Healthy Teens Act. Senator Nicholas Spano (R-Westchester) has introduced the bill in the New York State Senate.

The need for real sex education is highlighted during the month of May, which is National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. 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 program 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:

- include a strong parental involvement component encouraging family communication
- promote self-esteem and teach skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality including how to avoid sexual advances
- stress the value of abstinence while not ignoring those adolescents who have had sex
- provide medically accurate information about STI and pregnancy prevention including information about contraceptives

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