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ASSEMBLY WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE PASSES HEALTHY TEENS ACT Strong Bi-partisan Support for Comprehensive Sex Education Continues to Build

Albany, NY (May 24, 2005)_The Assembly Ways & Means Committee today favorably reported the Healthy Teens Act, paving the way for the bill to be approved by the New York State Assembly. The Healthy Teens Act (A.6619), authored by Assemblymember Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan), will create a grant program to fund age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education.

“Four out of ten New York teens have had sex before they graduate from high school,” said JoAnn M. Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. “Rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (STI) in New York are among the highest in the country.”

“Sex education is essential in preventing unintended pregnancies and exposure to STDs,” said JoAnn D. Smith, interim president & CEO of Planned Parenthood of Nassau County. (Please note that two women named JoAnn Smith serve as leaders of reproductive health care organizations in New York: JoAnn D. Smith recently assumed the role of interim president at Planned Parenthood Nassau County; JoAnn M. Smith is president of Family Planning Advocates of New York State.) “We are proud that Long Island Assemblymember Tom DiNapoli is supporting the effort to provide teens with the information they need to make healthy decisions and life choices.”

The bill overwhelmingly passed the Assembly Ways & Means Committee, chaired by Assemblymember Herman D. (Denny) Farrell (D-NYC) who is also a sponsor of the bill. The Healthy Teens Act now 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.