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HEALTHY TEENS ACT INTRODUCED IN NYS SENATE AND ASSEMBLY Bipartisan Legislation Will Provide Funding for Real Sex Education for Youth

Albany, NY (January 23, 2007)—Assemblymember Richard Gottfried and Senator George Winner today introduced legislation to secure funding for comprehensive sex education in New York State. The Healthy Teens Act (A.2856/S.1342) would provide resources to fund age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education for youth.

“The Healthy Teens Act recognizes the reality that New York State has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the nation,” said State Senator George Winner (R-Elmira). “It recognizes that age-appropriate, accessible, community-based, effective education and communication may represent the best hope in confronting this challenge.”

More than one million teenagers become pregnant each year in the United States. In 2004, New York’s teen pregnancy rate was 61.9 per 1000 – nearly 40,000 young people aged 15-19 became pregnant that year. Yet New York does not have a dedicated funding stream to support comprehensive sex education in schools.

“The numbers on teen pregnancy are staggering,” said Assemblymember Richard Gottfried (D-NYC). “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.” Last year, the Assembly passed Gottfried’s bill by a vote of 127-15. The Senate Health Committee favorably reported the legislation.

The Democrat and Republican sponsors of the uni bill were joined by representatives of Family Planning Advocates and Planned Parenthood affiliates from across the state in support of real sex education:

Clare Coleman, Planned Parenthood Mid-Hudson Valley
Betty DeFazio, Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse Region
Paul Drisgula, Planned Parenthood Mohawk Hudson
Joan Malin, Planned Parenthood of New York City
Debra Marcus Planned Parenthood of South Central New York
Patricia McGeown, Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood
Laura Meyers, Planned Parenthood of Western New York
Reina Schiffrin, Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic
JoAnn D. Smith, Planned Parenthood of Nassau County
Catherine Abate, Board Chair, Family Planning Advocates of New York State
JoAnn M. Smith, Family Planning Advocates of New York State

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“The Healthy Teens Act 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 M. Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. “We applaud this bipartisan legislation that will improve the health of young people in New York State.”

The Healthy Teens Act will enable school districts, school-based health centers, BOCES and qualified community organizations to apply for grants to develop and implement programs that provide students with real sex education. Communities will 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 who have had sex
- provide medically accurate information about sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy prevention including information about contraceptives.

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