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## **NATIONAL STUDY INDICATES NEW YORK'S SEX EDUCATION PROGRAMS INADEQUATE Age-Appropriate Sex Education Bill Would Help Youth Get Needed Information to Stay Healthy**

Albany, NY (June 22, 2004)—A new national study released today reports that while New York outspends most states on programs that teach abstinence-only sex education, more than 4 out of 10 New York students have had sex before they graduate from high school.

“The fact is, many young people are sexually active. New York youth are not getting the information they need to protect themselves against pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease,” said JoAnn Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. More than 40,000 New York State teens become pregnant every year and gonorrhea rates are highest among 15-24 year olds.

New York received more than \$7 million in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in 2003. Many of these programs require matching state or local funds. Programs that accept any federal abstinence-only funds are prohibited from teaching about – or even answering students’ questions about -- contraception, except to provide information about failure rates.

The SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States) study, entitled *State Profiles: A Portrait of Sexuality Education and Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in the United States*, found that sex education laws vary widely. New York, like many states, mandates HIV/AIDS education, but fails to provide more comprehensive information about sexuality.

State legislation to create the “Age-Appropriate Sex Education Grant Program” would help to address this omission. The bill, sponsored by Assemblymember Richard Gottfried (D-New York City) and Senator Nicholas Spano (R-Yonkers) is gaining bi-partisan support in the State Legislature. It passed the Assembly Health Committee unanimously on May 4, 2004.

The legislation would create a funding stream for sex education programs that provide “at-risk adolescents with the information, assistance, skills and support to enable them to make responsible decisions, including abstaining from sexual intercourse and for those who do become sexually active, the use of condoms or contraceptives effectively.”

"We know the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers agree that sex education should be taught in school. That's why we fully support the Age-Appropriate Sex Education Grant Program; because parents expect and students want the real facts on abstinence, reproductive health and contraception. Anything less would leave young people in the dark and at risk for disease and unwanted pregnancies," said Joan Malin, CEO of Planned Parenthood of New York City.

Family Planning Advocates has created an information campaign and a fact-filled web site to provide data about sex education in New York State. The site can be viewed at [www.getthefactsny.org](http://www.getthefactsny.org).

“New York is facing a critical health challenge. Families, teachers and community leaders must work together to ensure that students and parents have the information necessary to make healthy choices,” said Carol Love, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse Region. “The SIECUS study reinforces the need for comprehensive sexuality education programs for our youth.”

The SIECUS *State Profiles* show that the proliferation of unproven abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in New York is leaving too many of our kids at risk. The study can be viewed on the web at [www.siecus.org/policy/states](http://www.siecus.org/policy/states).

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