



League of Women Voters of New York State
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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT HEALTHY TEENS ACT

A. 2856 (Gottfried)
S. 1342 (Winner)

An act to amend the public health law and the state finance law, in relation to establishing the age-appropriate sex education grant program, to be referred to as the healthy teens act.

The League of Women Voters of New York State strongly supports this legislation which would establish an age-appropriate sex education grant program within the department of health. From annually appropriated amounts, the department will make grants to school districts, boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES), school based health centers, and community organizations. To receive the grants, these groups must have a history of reaching the adolescents of New York State, and assisting them through a comprehensive sexuality education program aimed at preventing sexually transmitted diseases (STDS) and unwanted pregnancies among youth. This is necessary due to the fact that New York State's teen pregnancy rates are among the worst in the nation, with 40,000 teen pregnancies in 2004. Also, according to the CDC, Chlamydia and gonorrhea rates are highest among 15-24 year olds nationwide, including in New York State. The implementation of the grant program will provide information and skills to adolescents aimed at preventing these problems and assisting them in their development to become healthy adults.

The League has long supported the devotion of more resources to health promotion and disease prevention so that consumers can take active responsibility for their own health. The league also supports citizens having increased opportunities to participate effectively in decisions regarding personal health as well as health care policy. This legislation would provide young adults with much needed information as well as empower them to make decisions related to their sexual health. Although abstinence education is important, we can not ignore the fact that many young adults are sexually active. Therefore, there is a responsibility to provide these adolescents with comprehensive sexuality education that would provide information regarding healthy sexual choices, including contraceptive use, which would help in decision making that prevents STDS and unwanted pregnancies.

For the reasons stated above, The League urges your support for A. 2856/S. 1342.