



**MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT FOR
THE HEALTHY TEENS ACT
A. 2856 (GOTTFRIED)
S. 1342 (WINNER)**

Since 1987, the New York State Education Commissioner's regulations have required that public schools throughout the state provide AIDS education to students in grades K-12, appropriate teacher training, curricula materials and evaluations of the program.

Despite these clearly delineated requirements, many schools throughout the state are not in full compliance with the HIV/AIDS mandates. These grave inadequacies exist in the face of increasing HIV infections among youth. Adolescents and young adults constitute one of the fastest growing populations with AIDS. It has been estimated that at least 50% of all new HIV infections nationwide are among young people under age 25 and that two Americans between ages 13 and 24 are infected with HIV every hour.

Schools throughout New York State are a natural and logical venue for reaching youth, providing a golden opportunity to reach millions of young people with key HIV prevention messages. It is imperative that New York State improve the quality and quantity of its HIV/AIDS education programs at all grade levels, as well as its comprehensive sex education programs. Comprehensive sex education is critical to preventing STD's and teen pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS lessons have the greatest impact when embedded within a sound comprehensive sex education program.

Comprehensive sex education, including HIV/AIDS, initiatives cannot happen without adequate funding streams. At a time when federal dollars are earmarked for abstinence-only programs, while none are earmarked for comprehensive sex education, it is more important than ever that New York State look out for the health and well-being of its young people by directing dollars towards comprehensive sex education.

To this end, **the New York AIDS Coalition supports A. 2856/ S. 1342** which would establish a competitive grant program open to local school districts, BOCES, school-based health centers and community-based organizations for the implementation of comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education.

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