

13 July 2007

Dear Representative,

As local, state, and national organizations concerned about the health and education of our nation's young people, we are profoundly dismayed by the House Appropriations Committee's decision to increase funding for the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) program by \$28 million for fiscal year 2008. We urge members of the House of Representatives, in the strongest possible terms, to reverse this ill-advised and fiscally irresponsible decision by ending or significantly cutting federal funding for CBAE.

Congress ought not support programs that censor information, promote gender stereotypes, provide inaccurate and misleading information, serve a narrow ideological agenda, and jeopardize the wellbeing of young people. Moreover, it is unconscionable that Congress would increase funding for programs that are unsupported by every leading public health and medical organization in this country and abroad. Every major medical and public health organization supports a comprehensive approach to sexuality education. These include the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, the Institute of Medicine, the National Institutes of Health, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine, among others. Several, including the American Public Health Association, the Institute of Medicine, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine, have gone so far as to call for the repeal of current abstinence-only programs and funding.

Scientific evidence does not support abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. No study in a professional peer-reviewed journal has found these programs to be broadly effective. Most recently, a federally funded study of abstinence-only programs was conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Released in April 2007, the study found no evidence that abstinence-only programs have achieved their goal to increase rates of sexual abstinence. This report followed on the heels of 13 states that evaluated their Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage programs with results ranging from finding the programs ineffective to finding them to be harmful. In addition, the non-partisan Government Accountability Office in November 2006 made clear that abstinence-only programs receive insufficient oversight and have few mechanisms in place to measure program effectiveness.

It is noteworthy that 10 states have rejected federal funding (through Title V of the Social Security Act) for abstinence-only programs. Acting on principle and in the best interest of their youth, these governors have rebuffed a source of much needed revenue because they concluded that these unduly restrictive and ideologically driven programs were, at a minimum, ineffective and, at worst, harmful.

Finally, from a political perspective, it is puzzling that Congress would increase funding for these programs when more than 90% of parents support comprehensive sexuality education and more than 6 in 10 voters say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports comprehensive sexuality education.

Since the Republican takeover in 1996, these programs have received unprecedented support and have exploded into a full fledged industry, funded by the federal government and connected to some of the most far right groups in the country. Now more than \$1.5 billion of taxpayer money has been wasted. This misappropriation of federal funds to support an ideological agenda is even more disturbing given that funding for evidence-based programs, such as those for HIV prevention, was previously slashed and has not been fully restored in this bill. The 110th Congress needs to do better by the young people of America.

In light of its lack of support from voters as well as medical and public health institutions, and its proven failure, we respectfully ask that you eliminate or cut—not increase—CBAE funding. Given that the previous chairman flat-funded these programs for the past two years, we expected better, not worse, from this new Congress.

America's families need real solutions that will help delay the onset of sexual activity and prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Abstinence-only programs are not the answer. Our youth deserve more from this Congress.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts
AIDS Action Council
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Foundation of Chicago (IL)
The AIDS Institute
AIDS Network
AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA)
AIDS Project Rhode Island
AIDS Resource Alliance
AIDS Services of Dallas (TX)
AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland (OH)
AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC)
Alaska Women's Lobby
Allies Linked for the Prevention of HIV and AIDS (a.l.p.h.a.)
Alternatives to Marriage Project
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Association for Health Education
American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors & Therapists (AASECT)
American Association of University Women (IL)
American Civil Liberties Union
American College Health Association
American Humanist Association
American Journal of Sexuality Education
American Psychiatric Association
American Public Health Association (APHA)
Americans for Democratic Action, New Jersey Chapter
Americans for Religious Liberty
amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research
Answer (NJ)
Business and Professional Women (AZ)
Cascade AIDS Project (Portland, OR)
Catholics for a Free Choice
The Center for HIV Law and Policy
Center for Inquiry
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality
Chicago Foundation for Women (IL)

Chicago Women's Health Center (IL)
Child, Home and Community, Inc. (Doylestown, PA)
Choice USA
Coalition for Positive Sexuality
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Colorado Organization on Adolescent, Pregnancy, Parenting, and Prevention (COAPPP)
Community Education Group
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Cortland Coalition for Choice (NY)
DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
Disciples for Choice
Disciples Justice Action Network (DJAN)
The Episcopal Women's Caucus
Eta Sigma Gamma, The National Health Education Honor Society
Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania
Family Planning Advocates of New York State
Family Planning Association of Northeast Ohio, Inc.
Family Planning Council (Philadelphia, PA)
Feminist Majority
Gay City Health Project (Seattle, WA)
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Georgia Parents for Responsible Health Education
Georgians for Choice
Harm Reduction Coalition
Health Quarters
Healthy Teen Network
HIV Law Project, Inc.
HIV Medicine Association
HIVictorious
Housing Works
Illinois Campaign for Responsible Sex Education
Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health
The Illinois Chapter of the Society for Public Health
Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Illinois PTA
International Women's Health Coalition
Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (IL)
Jewish Women International
Juneau Pro-Choice Coalition (JPCC) (AK)
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center (Los Angeles, CA)
Law Students for Choice
Legal Momentum
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center
Lifelong AIDS Alliance (Seattle, WA)
Living Room, Inc.
Lubbock Area Children Empowerment (TX)
Mary Wohlford Foundation

Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy
 McHenry County Citizens for Choice (MCCC) (IL)
 Minnesota AIDS Project
 Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting
 Montgomery County Teen Parent Task Force (PA)
 Mujeres Latinas en Accion
 The Naked Truth
 NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri
 NARAL Pro-Choice New York
 NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin
 NARAL Pro-Choice Wyoming
 National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
 National Association of Lesbian and Gay Addiction Professionals, Inc.
 National Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community
 Centers
 National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
 National Association of People with AIDS
 National Center for Transgender Equality
 National Coalition of STD Directors
 National Council of Jewish Women
 National Council of Jewish Women, Clearbrook Section, New Jersey
 National Council of Jewish Women, Colorado State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Florida State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Illinois State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Michigan State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Minnesota State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Missouri State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Ohio State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Pennsylvania State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Rhode Island State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Texas State Public Affairs
 National Council of Jewish Women, Washington State Public Affairs
 National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Inc.
 National Institute for Reproductive Health
 National Minority AIDS Council
 National Organization for Women
 National Organization for Women of New Jersey
 National Organization for Women of New York State, Inc.
 National Partnership for Women and Families
 National Sexuality Resource Center
 National Women's Health Network
 National Women's Law Center
 New Mexicans for Responsible Sexuality Education (NMRSE)
 New Morning Foundation
 Ohio AIDS Coalition
 Oregon NOW (National Organization for Women)
 Our Bodies Ourselves
 Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
 Pennsylvania Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Pennsylvania NOW, Inc.
PHFE-Choices
Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health
Planned Parenthood Mid-Hudson Valley
Planned Parenthood of Central Pennsylvania
Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon
Planned Parenthood of the Inland Northwest
Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options (PARO)
Pro-Choice Public Education Project
Protestants for the Common Good (IL)
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Connecticut, Inc.
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Indiana
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Massachusetts
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Michigan
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of New Jersey
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of New Mexico
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of New York
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Northern California
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Ohio
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Oklahoma
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of West Virginia
Religious Institute for Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing
Response Center (Skokie, IL)
Sexuality Education for Life Coalition
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Sierra Club
Sierra Club, New Jersey Chapter
Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality
South Carolina Campaign to End AIDS (SC-2EA)
Spa for California
Teen Pregnancy Coalition of San Mateo County (CA)
TII CANN - Title II Community AIDS National Network
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ
West House, Inc. (Williamsport, PA)
Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Coalition South Bay (CA)
The Woodhull Freedom Foundation