

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 16, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

We are writing to request that the Appropriations Committee provide a dedicated funding stream of \$28 million for abstinence-centered education in the FY2011 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill. These funds should come from existing funds within the Teen Pregnancy Prevention program's designation for discretionary programs.

As you know, sexual activity among teens continues to be a serious dilemma in our country. Some believe the best way to address this problem is to teach teens important life and decision-making skills that will help them have healthy, meaningful relationships that do not include sex. These skills are the primary focus of abstinence-centered programs. Others believe programs should discuss abstinence but ideally teach adolescents about the use of contraceptives should they be or become sexually active.

While it is unlikely Congress will ever end the debate for how best to prevent teen pregnancies, we can make sure states and local communities have a choice in how they address the problem. Historically Congress has always found a way to fund both abstinence-centered programs as well as more "comprehensive" sex education. It is unfortunate that funding for the Community Based Abstinence Education program and abstinence education demonstration grants through the Adolescent Family Life program was eliminated in FY2010, and that the administration is once again proposing that Congress no longer fund these programs that provide local communities with a choice to teach abstinence. In addition, the recently released guidelines for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention program, which replaced community-based programs for abstinence education, provide no priority for the risk avoidance message, nor any assurance that any abstinence-centered programs will receive funding.

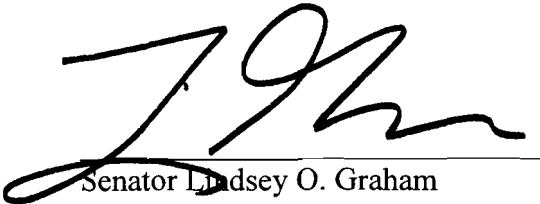
A groundbreaking study released in February of this year by the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine proves abstinence education is effective. The most rigorously designed and executed studies to ever examine the long-term impact of various sex education approaches, this report demonstrated that abstinence education was singularly

effective in delaying sexual initiation among high risk teens. It reports that a high-risk population of 6th and 7th graders receiving abstinence-centered education reduced sexual initiation, reduced the number of sexual partners (a crucial determinant in acquiring an STD) and further showed that abstinence instruction did not deter the use of condoms.

Abstinence education programs have historically received bi-partisan support. By re-establishing support for abstinence education programs within the FY2011 Labor/HHS/Education bill as part of the President's new Teen Pregnancy Prevention initiative, we can ensure that local communities have a choice in how they approach the issue of teen pregnancy prevention.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions you might have about the importance of abstinence education programs.

Sincerely,



Senator Lindsey O. Graham



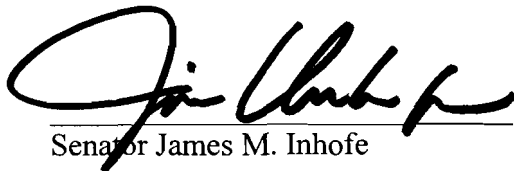
Senator Sam Brownback



Senator Mike Crapo



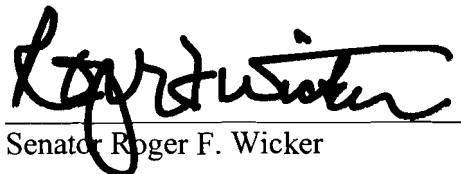
Senator Mike Johanns



Senator James M. Inhofe



Senator John Thune



Senator Roger F. Wicker