

June XX, 2010

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-218 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey:

On behalf of our constituents who believe there needs to be a balanced approach in reducing teen pregnancies, we are writing to request that the Appropriations Committee provide a dedicated funding stream of at least \$28 million for abstinence-centered education in the FY2011 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill. This request will not increase the President's funding recommendation for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, but will prioritize a portion of those funds for risk avoidance.

Federal abstinence education programs, such as the Community Based Abstinence Education program and abstinence education demonstration grants through the Adolescent Family Life program, are strongly supported by parents and 17 separate studies have demonstrated their effectiveness. Unfortunately, funding for these programs was eliminated in FY10. While administration officials have said that abstinence programs could apply for funding under the new discretionary teen pregnancy prevention program, the absence of a single focused risk avoidance funding stream will leave adolescents without access to the tools they need to delay sexual activity.

Opponents of abstinence education claim these programs are not effective, yet a landmark study has recently proven just the opposite. On February 1st, the Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine released a report on the most rigorously designed and executed studies ever to examine the long-term impact of various sex education approaches. The report showed that the abstinence program was singularly effective in delaying sexual initiation among high risk teens. The researcher further stated that the "single focus" of the abstinence program likely made the difference. This is a clear benefit in terms of delaying sex. 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. By re-establishing support for abstinence education programs, we assure that communities have a true choice in preventing teen pregnancies.

This is not a partisan issue. Abstinence education programs were first funded under former President Bill Clinton and have since received bi-partisan support. This is a public health message that we think should be continued and we urge you to appropriate the necessary funds to support programs that focus exclusively on abstinence.

Respectfully,

[Members of Congress]