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Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
S-131 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Arlen Specter
Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
S-131 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

We are writing to urge you to continue funding for Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) without any changes to the program. The recent statistics by the CDC, which revealed that 1 in 4 adolescent girls have at least one STD, certainly underscores the need for a strong commitment to the risk elimination message of abstinence-centered programs.

Two of the four STDs tracked in the recent CDC study can easily be spread by skin to skin contact which means that transmission can take place without intercourse and in spite of the use of a condom. Only abstinence will adequately stem this epidemic among teens.

Abstinence education is taught to some 2.5 million youth across the country. Preserving intact funding for this approach is the only way we assure that teens receive the information and skills needed to prevent the physical and emotional consequences of sexual activity. Parents overwhelmingly support the currently funded approach. Teens are also increasingly choosing to be abstinent, so this is a message that resonates with both teens and their parents.

There is also a growing body of research that shows that abstinence education is a good investment and is showing empirical success. A number of studies show that students who participate in abstinence programs delay sexual onset, reduce partners when sexually active and even discontinue sexual activity if previously sexually experienced. They are also no less likely to use a condom than their peers, if they do become sexually active.

Our organizations represent taxpayers, parents and students across the United States who are demographically diverse and politically diverse. This should not be a politically divisive issue. We urge you to put politics aside and support the message that best affords the sexual health of youth – and that is abstinence education.

Sincerely,