

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20525

June 5, 2008

Support Abstinence Education for our Youth

Dear Colleague:

The Title V program provides \$50 million annually for abstinence education that is distributed as state grants. Every four federal dollars must be matched with 3 state or local dollars. The program has received a series of temporary extensions, the most recent of which is set to expire on June 30, 2008, unless Congress takes action to reauthorize it. **We urge you to join us in signing the attached letter to Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell and Ranking Member Joe Barton in support of the reauthorization of the Title V Abstinence Education program.**

Opponents of abstinence education refer to it as "abstinence only." But abstinence education is much more than a simple "just say no" message. In fact, abstinence education programs provide a comprehensive and holistic approach that empowers teens to make informed and healthy decisions about their sexual behavior. They teach about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), contraceptives and their effectiveness against pregnancy and STDs, and the benefits of remaining abstinent. But abstinence education programs also give teens the tools necessary to make positive and healthy choices for themselves. They teach how to identify a healthy relationship, get out of a dangerous or abusive relationship, avoid inappropriate sexual advances, develop decision-making skills, and set goals for the future. Abstinence education is about equipping teens to navigate the many challenges and struggles of adolescence.

At least 11 existing studies have shown that abstinence education is working. But teens, themselves, have also affirmed the positive impact that abstinence education is having on their lives:

*"As teens, we receive so many **different** messages about how we should live. Support the next generation by providing us with the information that we need to know how to handle these confusing years. We need to hear the message of abstinence, Please **help** us receive the education we need to protect ourselves physically and emotionally."*

Jenna Lavenuta, abstinence education student

*"**By** supporting abstinence education, you are allowing students to choose a better future and avoid the emotional and physical consequences and risks of having casual **sex.**"*

Lauren Bauer, abstinence education student.

*"I hope that you **will** take time to consider the future of teens whose lives, emotions, and health are at stake. I hope that you will listen to this plea and continue to support abstinence education for teens."*

Carissa Looney, abstinence education student

Abstinence education provides teens with accurate and appropriate information about the risks of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy and teaches them how to avoid risky behavior. **Support our youth. Support good decisions and positive behavior. Support Abstinence Education.**

Sincerely,



¶ Dan Boren
Member of Congress



s/ Joe Pitts
Member of Congress

June xx, 2008

Chairman John Dingell
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Joe Barton
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2322A Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell and Ranking Member Barton:

We are writing to urge your continued support of Title V (Section 510) abstinence education in terms of unabated funding as well as maintaining its current guidelines. It is vital that a reauthorization of this funding be made for a minimum of 1 year so that states have the ability to administer the funds. Abstinence education is an important primary health message that is taught to some 2.5 million youth across the country. Only by preserving intact funding for this approach, can we assure that communities have a true choice in the nature of sex education provided to teens.

A recent poll shows that parents overwhelmingly support the public health message currently in Title V and when asked where they wanted their tax dollars spent, they supported funding of the abstinence message contained in this program over any other approach by a 3:1 margin!

It is also important to note that abstinence education programs are demonstrating significant 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.

Millions of youth will continue to receive education that provides a risk-eliminating advantage gained by abstaining from sexual activity if abstinence education funding is continued. This is not a partisan issue. With President Clinton signing Title V abstinence education into law and President Bush signing SPRANS-CBAE abstinence education into law, concern for youth crosses both sides of the aisle. It is a public health message that deserves to be continued.

Sincerely,