



Family Planning Advocates of NYS
17 Elk Street
Albany, New York 12207-1002
Phone: (518)436-8408
Fax: (518)436-0004
Website: www.fpaofnys.org
CONTACT: Susan Pedo
518.436.8408,x212

PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTS URGE SENATORS TO PASS THE HEALTHY TEENS ACT Professors, Pediatricians Say Students Need Real Sex Education

Albany, NY (June 6, 2006)—Columbia University professors today met with New York State Senators to encourage passage of the Healthy Teens Act (A.6619-c, S.5121-c).

“Pediatricians and parents across the state know that their children need better sex education,” said John Santelli, MD, MPH, chair of the Heilbrunn Department of Population and Family Health at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. “The data clearly show that comprehensive sex education helps young people delay the initiation of intercourse and be better prepared when they do become sexually active.”

Santelli is an author of scientific research and a study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* earlier this year that found: “Providing ‘abstinence only’ or ‘abstinence until marriage’ messages as a sole option for teenagers is flawed from scientific and medical ethics viewpoints.”

More than \$13 million was spent on abstinence-only sex education in New York last year. The state currently has no designated funding for comprehensive sex education. The Healthy Teens Act would provide resources for comprehensive sex education programs through a competitive grant program. The bill is not a mandate. It allows schools and communities to develop sex education programs that best suit their needs while ensuring that students receive medically accurate information.

The Assembly has passed the Healthy Teens Act. The bill now awaits a vote by the State Senate.

“As a professor of public health and a mother, I know that real sex education works,” said Jennifer S. Hirsch, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociomedical Sciences at Columbia University. “We are drawing on research to develop a comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education program through a Columbia University partnership at my son’s school. I want my son to have the best possible education, and every student in New York deserves the same opportunity.”

“The Senators with whom we met were very responsive to the scientific research supporting comprehensive sex education. New York should not place ideology above science when it comes to our children’s health,” said JoAnn Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. “But time is running out and the Senate needs to pass the Healthy Teens Act now.”

###