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## **HEALTHY TEENS ACT ADVANCES IN STATE SENATE**

### **Senate Health Committee Passes Legislation to Support Real Sex Education in New York**

Albany, NY (May 23, 2006)—The New York State **Senate Health Committee** today advanced the **Healthy Teens Act** (A.6619c/S.5121c) with a favorable report on the bill. This important legislation, which would provide resources to fund age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education for youth, passed the Assembly on April 3 by a vote of 127-15.

“This is a crucial vote for the young people of New York State,” said JoAnn M. Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State, which is leading a coalition of more than 120 organizations supporting passage of the Healthy Teens Act. “New York has some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections in the nation. Too many of our young people are not getting the information they need to make healthy decisions.”

Four out of ten young people have sex before graduating from high school. Research shows that comprehensive sex education helps to delay the onset of intercourse, reduce frequency of intercourse, increase condom and contraception use, and decrease the number of sexual partners.

“Passing this bill would mean common sense, age appropriate sex education,” said Senator Nick Spano (R-Westchester), who sponsors the bill in the Senate. “The abstinence-only programs being taught in our schools currently just aren’t working. We need to give our kids thorough and comprehensive sex education so that they can make responsible decisions to protect themselves and their partners.”

New York currently has no designated funding stream for comprehensive sex education. Last year, the State increased the amount spent on failed abstinence-only sex education programs by \$1 million – to \$13.2 million. A 2004 Congressional report found that many federally-funded abstinence-only programs contain false or misleading information about reproductive health.

“Age-appropriate, science-based and smart sex education will help teens make the right decisions about their sexual activity,” said Assemblymember Richard N. Gottfried (D-Manhattan), chair of the Assembly Committee on Health who sponsors the bill in the Assembly. “As a parent and a grandparent, I know that the Healthy Teens Act is needed to help bring down New York's staggering teen pregnancy numbers.”

More than 88 percent of New Yorkers agree that students should have information about contraception and the prevention of sexually transmitted disease, and 72 percent favor the Healthy Teens Act. The Healthy Teens Act must now be reported favorably by the Senate Finance Committee, passed by the full Senate, then signed by Governor George Pataki, to become law.

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