



HEALTHY YOUTH ACT

LETTER OF ENDORSEMENTS

We, the undersigned, representing parents, clergy, social justice and educational organizations, strongly endorse providing abstinence-based, scientifically-accurate, comprehensive sex education to students in North Carolina schools.

We believe young people deserve information that will help them make lifelong responsible decisions.

We believe young people need and deserve a healthy living curriculum that includes information about abstinence as well as the effectiveness of birth control and condoms in preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

The Need for Science-based Comprehensive Sex Education:

- ✓ Every day in North Carolina **53 teenage girls**, 15 to 19 years of age, become pregnant. (*N.C. Dept. of Health & Human Services, State Center for Health Statistics, NC Reported Pregnancies-2006*)
- ✓ In 2006, **405 young girls in North Carolina, ages ten to fourteen**, became pregnant. (*N.C. Dept. of Health & Human Services, State Center for Health Statistics, NC Reported Pregnancies-2006*)
- ✓ In a 2006 national survey, **26% of high school students who dropped out** of school said that they did so because they became parents. (*The Silent Epidemic, Civic Enterprises, Peter D. Hart Research Associates, produced for Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*)
- ✓ In 2005, **48% of female** high school students and **54% of male high school students in NC reported ever having sexual intercourse**. (*Youth Risk Surveillance –United States, 2005, Danice K. Eaton, et al., Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, vol. 55, no ss-5, June 2006*)
- ✓ **Roughly 50% of all new sexually transmitted infections occur among youth ages 15 to 24**. (*Weinstock H, Berman S, Cates W, Jr. (2004). Sexually transmitted diseases among American youth: Incidence and prevalence estimates, 2000. Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 36, 6-10*)

Signature _____

Organization _____

Lifelong Responsible Decisions Begin with Education

Until 1996, North Carolina recognized and understood the need to teach students about the benefits of birth control and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Most North Carolinians, who attended middle school or high school prior to 1996, remember receiving comprehensive sex education.

In 1995, the NC General Assembly passed legislation to do away with comprehensive sex education and to replace it with an “abstinence-until-marriage-only” curriculum. In 1996, the Federal government created Title V, a \$50 million per year entitlement program to fund “abstinence-only” programs. Title V grants may not be used to “promote birth control or condom use” even in HIV/AIDS education.

Recently, several major studies have demonstrated that abstinence-only programs are ineffective in changing teenagers’ sexual behavior. Most notably, a 10-year federally funded evaluation initiated by Congress proved abstinence-only education makes little difference in the lives of young people.

In today’s world of highly sexualized media and rising rates of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, it makes no sense to deny young people access to medically accurate information that will equip them to make lifelong responsible decisions. The average age of marriage today is in the mid-to late 20s for both females and males. Abstinence only curricula have been proven to be ineffective in delaying the onset of sexual intercourse, reducing the number of sexual partners and reducing STD transmission rates.

Roughly one-half of high school students in North Carolina admit to having sex even after receiving “abstinence until marriage only” sex education. Other statistics point to the dire consequences of this gap.

According to a newly released study by the Center for Disease Control, one in four (26 percent) young women between the ages of 14 and 19 in the United States – or 3.2 million teenage girls – is infected with at least one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (human papillomavirus (HPV), chlamydia, herpes simplex virus, and trichomoniasis). The rates are disproportionately higher for young girls of color.

A third of young people in North Carolina do not receive their high school diploma. Nationally, on average 26% of those who drop out do so because they become a parent.

When a young person drops out of school before graduating, we all lose. We lose the contributions these students could make as productive and educated workers and we end up paying more for public assistance and prisons. Studies show students who drop out of high school are more likely to rely on public assistance and become involved in the criminal justice system.

But the real cost is borne by the teenager who in all likelihood will live a life mired in poverty, and reduced potential. This is particularly true for young women who give birth as teenagers and do not finish high school. Girls who drop out are less likely than their male counterparts to be gainfully employed and more likely to rely on public assistance.

Comprehensive sex education helps young people delay sexual activity while also providing them with information they need to make lifelong responsible decisions. All young deserve the opportunity to succeed.