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STATE MUST FOCUS ON PROVIDING REAL SEX EDUCATION FOR NEW YORK'S YOUTH Legislative Session Begins January 4 with Governor Pataki's State of the State Message

Albany, NY (January 4, 2006)—Family Planning Advocates of New York State today called on Governor George Pataki and the New York State Legislature to support real sex education for New York's youth during the upcoming legislative session.

Last year, the New York State Assembly passed The Healthy Teens Act by a vote of 123 to 18. The Act would create a grant program to fund comprehensive sex education for youth. This legislation, sponsored by Assemblymember Richard Gottfried, received strong bi-partisan support in both houses of the legislature, with more than 50 legislators co-sponsoring the bill.

New Yorkers know that teens need real sex education to lead healthy lives. More than 3 out of 4 New York voters believe that age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education should be taught in public schools. Popular support for comprehensive sex education crosses geographic lines, with 83% of suburban voters, 76% of upstate voters and 74% of New York City voters in favor.

“Rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases in New York are among the highest in the country,” said JoAnn M. Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. “More than 40,000 New York teens become pregnant each year. The vast majority of these pregnancies are unintended and could be prevented.”

More than one million American teenagers become pregnant each year. Studies have shown that abstinence-only sex education, which is promoted and funded by the federal government, does not work. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, “There do not currently exist any abstinence-only programs with strong evidence that they either delay sex or reduce teen pregnancy.” An analysis of 11 states' evaluations of abstinence-only programs found no lasting positive impact on behavior.

Yet New York spent \$11 million in state and federal resources on abstinence-only programs in 2004.

A Columbia University study of abstinence-only programs found that these programs may actually increase risk to youth. Not only did virginity “pledge” participants still have premarital sex and acquire sexually transmitted diseases at rates similar to non-participants, participants were less likely to use contraception when they did have sex and were less likely to seek STD testing despite comparable infection rates.

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