



Press Release

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PRESS CONFERENCE – ROOM 2A Healthy Teens Act Wednesday, February 20th, 3:30 PM

(Hartford) **Education Committee Co-chairs, Senator Tom Gaffey (D-13th District) and Representative Andrew Fleischmann (D-18th District)** announce the introduction of the **Connecticut Healthy Teens Act**.

The bill would ensure that Connecticut's youth have access to medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education providing them with the necessary skills to make safe and responsible choices surrounding relationships and their sexual health.

Representative Fleischmann said, "We must provide clear, accurate information to young people that is both responsive and responsible. When it comes to preventing unwanted pregnancies and promoting good health among young people, this must be our Plan A."

Advocates point to startling statistics about the state's Sexually Transmitted Disease rates among youth. Youth between the ages of 13 – 24 account for 70% of the state's Chlamydia cases and 50% of Gonorrhea cases. Shawn M. Lang, Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition said, "What this means at a minimum is that youth are not getting ongoing, science-based comprehensive sexuality education and are engaging in high risk behaviors. At worst, it means we will see HIV infection rates follow in its wake. Already, 27% of reported HIV cases are in people under the age of 29; which means most were infected as teens."

"What we know is that parents assume their children are receiving age-appropriate, science-based information about relationships, life decisions and sexuality; but that's not true in all school systems," said Susan Yolen, Vice President of Public Affairs & Communications, Planned Parenthood of Connecticut.

Statements from youth who participated in a four-day intensive program which included education on abstinence, birth control methods and education about STIs and disease prevention and healthy relationships highlight the critical need for this legislation. Youth feedback included:

- ✚ "It teaches things most healthy classes in school don't."
- ✚ "They would be able to make smarter choices and learn about having a satisfying relationship without sex."

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- ✚ "I won't drop the conversation until they get how important safe sex is. And they would be more smart about what they would do."

✚ “Get tested and make safer choices before having sex if I choose to.”

Along with Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischman, speakers will include:

- ✚ Mayor Kevin Cavanaugh, New London
- ✚ Chris Clouet, Superintendent of Schools, New London
- ✚ Marnise Tucker, Hartford CT (Student, Sport and Medical Sciences Academy)
- ✚ Zachary Kirwood, Orange, CT (Student, Amity Regional Senior High School) and Planned Parenthood peer educator.
- ✚ Jean King, Hartford Action Plan, 860-232-0641, jeank@pariskygroup.com
- ✚ Rita Whitehead, Community Organizer, New London Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, Rwhitehead@lmhosp.org
- ✚ Ryan Melvin, HIV Case Manager, Prospect House, Bridgeport, ryana0504@aol.com

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