



Fact Sheet

Responsible Education About Life Act

September 2006

S. 368 – introduced in the Senate by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)

H.R. 2553 – introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA)

The Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act will provide states with federal funding for programs that teach comprehensive sex education that stresses both abstinence and contraception. **Currently there is no federal funding for comprehensive sex education**, despite the fact that, since 1998, Congress has obligated more than \$1 billion in federal and state matching funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs which have not been proven effective in reducing the risks of unplanned pregnancy or transmission of sexually transmitted infections among adolescents.

The REAL Act will:

- Provide funding to states for medically accurate and age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in schools
- Teach that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections
- Provide accurate information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barriers methods used to prevent pregnancy
- Support sex education programs that have been evaluated and proven to decrease teen pregnancy
- Ensure that adolescents receive critically needed health information

Programs that provide a strong abstinence message coupled with clear, honest information about sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, social pressures, and how and when to obtain health care, have been found to be effective at delaying onset of sexual activity, reducing the number of sexual partners, and increasing use of contraception, according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy and Douglas Kirby's "Emerging Answers."

Adolescents need the REAL Act because:

- In 2003, 17,670 babies were born to teen mothers in Illinois, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)
- 40% of Illinois' new chlamydia and gonorrhea cases are among youth age 10 to 19 (IDPH)
- An estimated 50% of new HIV infections are among people under age 25, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Teachers need the REAL Act because:

- 66% of classrooms in Illinois schools are not providing comprehensive sex education (National Opinion Research Center)
- 52.7% of surveyed sex education teachers in Illinois do not teach about where to get birth control and health related services (National Opinion Research Center)
- The percentage of high school students in the United States who were taught about HIV/AIDS decreased nearly 5% from 1997-2005 (CDC)