



Sex Education in New York State Schools

- ▶ *Young people must have access to comprehensive sex education that includes information about contraception and disease prevention.*

Proposal

The "Age Appropriate Sex Education Grant Program" would establish a grant fund for schools and community-based organizations to provide effective sex education programs to students. (A.8599-Gottfried)

Rationale

New York State faces a critical health challenge. In 2000, 44,000 New York State teens became pregnant. In addition, rates of gonorrhea are the highest among 15-24 year olds. More than 4 in 10 young people in New York State have had sex before they graduate high school. New York State is not doing enough to prepare young people to make healthy decisions.

There is no direct funding to New York State schools for the provision of HIV or sex education, except for "abstinence-only" programs. Programs that omit information about contraception leave teens vulnerable to unintended pregnancies and STIs. New York State needs to do more.

Sex education programs that provide information about contraception and disease prevention and teach abstinence do not increase sexual intercourse or sexual risk behaviors. In fact, research shows that these programs have been proven to delay the onset of intercourse, reduce the frequency of intercourse, decrease the number of sexual partners of program participants and increase condom or contraception use.

Sex education that includes disease and pregnancy prevention garners a great deal of support in New York State. A 2003 Zogby poll of likely voters shows that 77% of New Yorkers support age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education. Popular support for sex education crosses geographic lines with 83% of suburban voters, 76% of upstate voters, and 74% of New York city voters favoring such programs.

Impact

This bill would establish a grant program to distribute much needed resources to schools and community-based organizations to provide medically-accurate, age-appropriate sex education programs. More young people would have access to life-saving information to help them make responsible decisions.