

***NYS COALITION FOR  
SCHOOL-BASED PRIMARY CARE***  
**Memorandum of Support**  
**A.2856 (Gottfried)/S.1342 (Winner)**  
**Healthy Teens Act**

The New York State Coalition for School-Based Primary Care strongly supports A.6619 (Gottfried)/S.5121 (Spano). The New York State Coalition for School-Based Primary Care is a statewide coalition of 190 School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) providing primary health care and mental health services to over 200,000 underserved children in the State.

This bill establishes a comprehensive, age appropriate health education grant program in the State Department of Health. Grants would be made available on a competitive basis to school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), community-based organizations and SBHCs for the provision of health education programs aimed at preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The legislation requires applicants to demonstrate that their programs will involve parents and other adults in the curriculum, encourage family communication, provide medically accurate information, and help young people to develop the skills that they need to make responsible decisions about their health and reproductive lives.

Comprehensive health education programs have been proven to reduce unintended pregnancies and STDs. In New York, as well as nationally, the highest rates of STDs are among 15-19 year olds. Nationally, half of all new HIV infections are among young people under the age of 25 (Centers of Disease Control). In addition, a recent Kaiser Family Foundation report found that young people have serious misconceptions about STDs, HIV and AIDS and express a need for information about sexual health.

This legislation would create an option for schools districts to work with community organizations, parents, teachers, and students to improve the health and lives of young people. School-Based Health Centers are uniquely suited to work as partners in this community effort because they bring trusted professionals such as physicians, social workers, Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners directly to adolescents and children in schools in the neediest areas of the State. SBHCs work with parents, teachers and students to improve the overall physical and mental health of high-risk youth by providing preventive health screenings for conditions such as asthma and HIV, health care treatments, preventive health education, and individual and group counseling.

The Healthy Teens Act will provide schools districts with the necessary resources to help adolescents and children make informed choices about their reproductive health. **The Coalition for School-Based Primary Care strongly urges the New York State Legislature to adopt this legislation.**