



## **MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT: HEALTHY TEENS ACT**

A. 2856 (Gottfried)  
S. 1342 (Winner)

AN ACT to amend the public health law and the state finance law, in relation to establishing the age-appropriate sex education grant program, to be referred to as the healthy teens act

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Prevent child abuse is concerned about teen pregnancy because of its two-fold relationship to child abuse and neglect.

First, having been abused as a child increases the likelihood of teen pregnancy. We believe this risk factor can be mitigated by effective and age appropriate sex education that helps young people develop skills to make responsible decisions.

Perhaps even more compelling, teenage childbearing decreases opportunities for both mother and child. On average, the children of teen mothers are less healthy, more likely to suffer child abuse and be placed in foster care, more likely to engage in criminal behavior, and less likely to be economically and socially successful as adults. Studies have concluded that the most important risk factors for infant homicide are teenage mothers, teenage mothers with more than one child, and teenage mothers who have not completed high school.

Young people have right to information that can protect their health and save their own and their future children's lives.

The Healthy Teens Act would establish a competitive grant program open to local school districts, school-based health centers, BOCES and community-based organizations for the implementation of comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education. This program, to be implemented by the Department of Health, would ensure that programs allow for honest interaction between teachers and students and fund the use of the most effective teaching methods for preventing unintended pregnancy and STIs.

The Act would create a funding source for schools and communities to provide age-appropriate programs so that young people can learn how to protect themselves, build self-esteem, learn negotiation and refusal skills and become better equipped to face an increasingly sexualized world propelled by mass media.

New Yorkers overwhelmingly support sex education in schools. This legislation is not a mandate, but allows school districts to work with community-based organizations to address these concerns in a school setting. It will provide appropriate funding to programs that provide accurate health information to young people in order to help them make healthy choices.

**Therefore, Prevent Child Abuse New York, Inc. urges passage of the Healthy Teens Act.**