

November 3, 2008

Dear Editor,

In a recent study conducted by the Public Health Institute, a whopping 89% of California parents sampled want their students to receive comprehensive sex education that includes information about contraception and protection from sexually transmitted diseases. And 96% of parents were opposed to abstinence-only requirements that prohibit instruction about contraceptive methods at any grade level. No single subgroup by region, religion, income, education or political party dipped below an 80% support level for comprehensive sex education.

The Economic Opportunity Commission of San Luis Obispo County's Information and Education Program (I & E) has provided age-appropriate, medically accurate and comprehensive sexual health education to youth, ages 10-18, in schools countywide since 1979. This program, in addition to other local teen pregnancy prevention efforts, have helped contribute to a 19% reduction of births to teens, age 12-19, in SLO County from 2000 to 2006 (from 245 to 198). Yet this high-impact program just received a budget cut of 37.5%, seriously jeopardizing our ability to fully deliver these trusted services and continue our Y-CARE? peer education program and annual "Teen Mommalogues" performances.

In 2004, the annual cost to County taxpayers for teen births was estimated to be \$7 million. Every dollar that funds effective teen pregnancy prevention programs saves taxpayers \$5.33 in Cash Aid and other mandated social services. Please encourage our state legislators to restore full funding to this project and consider making a donation to I & E c/o EOC, 1030 Southwood Drive, SLO, CA 93401.

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