

August 17, 2010

Jeffrey Zients
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Acting Director Zients:

As you develop the President's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Request, the undersigned local, state, and national organizations dedicated to the health and welfare of our nation's young people, urge you to zero out funding for the failed Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program (Title V, Section 510 (b) of the Social Security Act). In this tight fiscal climate, the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program does not warrant scarce taxpayer dollars. Peer-reviewed scientific evidence simply does not support an abstinence-only-until-marriage approach and, by providing misinformation and withholding accurate information that young people need to make informed decisions, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs deny young people life-saving information.

Since 1996, the United States has squandered more than \$1.5 billion in federal and state funding on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that fail to teach teens how to prevent unintended pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Since President Obama took office, his administration has eliminated two-thirds of the federal funding previously dedicated to ineffective abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, and we applaud him for these achievements.

With the President's support, the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program expired on June 30, 2009, and, at that time, had been refused by nearly half of the states both because the statute restricts how states can use the funding and the fact that overwhelming evidence—including the federal government's own study—has proven such programs to be ineffective and a waste of taxpayer dollars. Last fall, conservatives managed to insert funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the Senate health care reform bill and the language remained in the final legislation. This extension equals \$250 million for failed abstinence-only-until-marriage programs over the next five years (2010–2014). The President's Budget Requests for Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011 did not include funding for this ineffective program and we urge the President to stand strong and call once again for the elimination of this unnecessary and wasteful spending.

In a June 8, 2010 memorandum to the heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, former OMB Director Peter Orszag wrote that funding should not be “spent out of inertia, but only when it contributes to achieving a clear national priority.” We have been assured by the administration's words and actions that teaching young people fear- and shame-based abstinence-only-until-marriage programs is not a priority. We commend the administration for prioritizing evidence-based efforts to prevent unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other STDs through several initiatives; however, continued funding for the failed Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program flies in the face of these initiatives and may harm other laudable efforts to improve sexual health outcomes for adolescents.

Continuing to fund the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage programs not only has grave ramifications for the health of young people, but also creates a financial burden on taxpayers beyond

just the cost of the federal program. It has been estimated that the public costs associated with teen birth in the United States were at least \$9.1 billion in 2004. Furthermore, the cost for treatment of the over nine million cases of STIs and HIV that occurred among young people ages 15–24 in 2000 was \$6.5 billion (in year 2000 dollars).

In addition, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs have been sharply criticized by leading medical professional organizations. The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies has called for the termination of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs because they represent “poor fiscal and public health policy.” Leading public health and medical professional organizations—including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society of Adolescent Medicine, and the American Psychological Association—have raised serious ethical concerns about the U.S. support for such programs and do not support an abstinence-only-until-marriage approach.

Finally, the federal definition of “abstinence education” contained in the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program promotes marriage as the only acceptable family structure; in a society that generally prohibits gay men and lesbians from marrying, the focus on marriage creates a hostile learning environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth and children of LGBT or single parents. It stigmatizes youth who have been sexually abused; denies information to sexually active youth and HIV-positive youth; and often presents young people with fear- and shame-based messages. Though they are often presented to communities and school boards as programs designed to prevent pregnancy or STDs, including HIV/AIDS, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs are not effective at doing either. Instead, they censor vital health care information and often promote gender stereotypes.

The administration should continue to act in the best interest of young people by supporting public health and education policies that are comprehensive, rooted in the best science, and reflect mainstream values. Our goals should be to help young people navigate adolescence and become healthy adults; funding for the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program does not advance those goals.

Sincerely,

Abortion Care Network (Washington, DC)
Advocates for Youth (Washington, DC)
AIDS Action Council (Washington, DC)
AIDS Alliance of Greenwich (Greenwich, CT)
AIDS Foundation of Chicago (Chicago, IL)
The AIDS Institute (Washington, DC, and Tampa, FL)
AIDS Project Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)
AIDS Resource (Williamsport, PA)
AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland (Cleveland, OH)
AIDS/HIV Services Group (ASG) (Charlottesville, VA)
Alternatives to Marriage Project, Inc. (Brooklyn, NY)
American Association for Health Education (Reston, VA)
American Civil Liberties Union (Washington, DC)
American Humanist Association (Washington, DC)
American Medical Women’s Association (Philadelphia, PA)
American Public Health Association (Washington, DC)

American School Health Association (Kent, OH)
American Social Health Association (Washington, DC)
American Society for Reproductive Medicine (Washington, DC)
Answer (Piscataway, NJ)
Arizona Family Planning Council (Phoenix, AZ)
Arizona PTA (Arizona)
Barb Steinberg Presents, LLC (Austin, TX)
Black Women's Health Imperative (Washington, DC)
Boulder Valley Women's Health Center (Boulder, CO)
Catholics for Choice (Washington, DC)
CAVDA-Citizens AIDS Project (Mount Prospect, IL)
Cedar River Clinics (Yakima, Tacoma, and Renton, WA)
The Center for HIV Law & Policy (New York, NY)
Center for Women Policy Studies (Washington, DC)
Center on Halsted (Chicago, IL)
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers (New York, NY)
CHAT—Coalition of Healthy Arizona Teens (Arizona)
Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (Chicago, IL)
Chicago House and Social Service Agency (Chicago, IL)
Chicago Recovery Alliance (Chicago, IL)
Chicago Women's AIDS Project (Chicago, IL)
Coalition for Positive Sexuality (Washington, DC)
Community Access National Network (Washington, DC)
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP) (Providence, RI)
Denver Teen Pregnancy Prevention Partnership (DTPPP) (Denver, CO)
EyesOpenIowa (Des Moines, IA)
Faith Aloud (St. Louis, MO)
Family Equality Council (Washington, DC)
Family Planning Council (Philadelphia, PA)
Feminist Majority (Arlington, VA and Los Angeles, CA)
Fulton County Health Department (Canton, IL)
Gay Men's Health Crisis (New York, NY)
Generational Alliance (Washington, DC)
Georgia Parents for Responsible Health Education (Atlanta, GA)
Harlem United Community AIDS Center, Inc. (New York, NY)
The Healthy Colorado Youth Alliance (Colorado)
Healthy Kids Rhode Island (Rhode Island)
HIV Law Project (New York, NY)
HIVictorious, Inc. (Madison, WI)
Human Rights Campaign (Washington, DC)
Illinois Alliance for Sound Aids Policy (IL ASAP) (Illinois)
Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (Chicago, IL)
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition (Chicago, IL)
International Women's Health Coalition (New York, NY)
JoRay House (Chicago, IL)
Kentucky Health Justice Network (Louisville, KY)
Love Heals, the Alison Gertz Foundation for AIDS Education (New York, NY)
Minnesota AIDS Project (Minneapolis, MN)

Mississippi in Action (Jackson, MS)
NARAL Pro-Choice America (Washington, DC)
NARAL Pro-Choice California (San Francisco, CA)
NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado Foundation (Denver, CO)
NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota (Saint Paul, MN)
NARAL Pro-Choice New Hampshire (Concord, NH)
NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio (Cleveland and Columbus, OH)
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon (Portland, OR)
NARAL Pro-Choice South Dakota (Sioux Falls, SD)
NARAL Pro-Choice Washington (Seattle, WA)
NARAL Pro-Choice Wyoming (Laramie, WY)
National Association of County and City Health Officials (Washington, DC)
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH) (Washington, DC)
National Coalition for LGBT Health (Washington, DC)
National Council of Jewish Women (Washington, DC)
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (Washington, DC)
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund (Washington, DC)
National Institute for Reproductive Health (New York, NY)
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (New York, NY and Washington, DC)
National Partnership for Women & Families (Washington, DC)
National Women's Health Network (Washington, DC)
National Women's Law Center (Washington, DC)
National Youth Advocacy Coalition (Washington, DC)
Nebraska AIDS Project (Omaha, NE)
Nevada County Citizens for Choice, Inc. (Nevada County, CA)
Nurses in AIDS Care (Akron, OH)
Ohio Advocates Youth Leadership Council (Cleveland, OH)
PA/MA AIDS Education & Training Center (Philadelphia, PA)
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National (Washington, DC)
Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative at AIDS Foundation of Chicago (Chicago, IL)
People For the American Way (Washington, DC)
Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health (New York, NY)
Planned Parenthood Federation of America (Washington, DC)
Population Connection (Washington, DC)
Proud & Pretty in Pink (California)
Rainbow Health Initiative (Minneapolis, MN)
The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (Washington, DC)
Republican Majority for Choice (Washington, DC)
Secular Coalition for America (Washington, DC)
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) (Washington, DC)
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective (Atlanta, GA)
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (Washington, DC)
Society for Public Health Education (Washington, DC)
Southwest Women's Law Center (Albuquerque, NM)
Texas Freedom Network (Austin, TX)
Traction (North Carolina)
Traction Action Fund (North Carolina)
Tri-State Alliance, Inc. (Evansville, IN)

U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN) (Oakland, CA)
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (Washington, DC)
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries (Washington, DC)
Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS) (Washington, DC)
Visual AIDS (New York, NY)
West House Personal Care Home (Williamsport, PA)
Women of Reform Judaism (New York, NY)
Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease (WORLD) (Oakland, CA)

Cc: Tina Tchen, Director, White House Office of Public Engagement
Jeffrey Crowley, Director, Office of National AIDS Policy
Jack Smalligan, Chief, Income Maintenance Branch, Office of Management and Budget
Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services
Bryan Samuels, Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families