

April 10, 2007

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As leading national organizations concerned about the health of our nation's youth, we are writing to request an end to the abstinence-only-until-marriage program funded under Title V of the Social Security Act. As you know, the program is set to expire on June 30, 2007.

More than \$1.5 billion in taxpayer money has been squandered on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in recent years. After such a large expenditure, the vast body of research fails to show that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs actually help young people make good decisions in the long term. In fact, numerous evaluations and reports have found that these programs are ineffective, inaccurate, misleading, and are not receiving proper oversight. Thirteen different states have recently evaluated their federally funded abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and not a single one has found positive, long-term impacts.

On another deeply troubling point, research has revealed that many of the curricula funded by this program are rife with medical inaccuracies. It is inexcusable for any taxpayer-funded program to tell young people that condoms fail to protect them, that contraception does not work, and that HIV can be spread through sweat and tears. This trend has been well documented, and even some supporters of the program acknowledge the problem – yet they fail to remedy it.

For these reasons, more and more states are simply refusing to participate in the program. Eight states, including Montana, now reject Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding altogether. In states such as California, Maine, and New Jersey, it is essentially illegal to teach these programs in publicly funded schools. All told, one-fifth of the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding—over \$11 million—is now left unspent and an additional dozen states are considering, as Montana did, whether these programs are consistent with public health goals and mainstream values.

Finally, other federal funding sources exist for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and are dealt with annually on a discretionary basis during the appropriations process. The continuance of the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program, in the face of tight budgetary constraints and as an entitlement, is fiscally irresponsible. This is particularly the case, again, given the evidence against the program and its inability to demonstrate efficacy. This funding is better spent on other pressing matters before the Congress.

For these reasons, we ask that you allow the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program to expire on June 30, 2007.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
AIDS Action Council
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
The AIDS Institute

American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Association for Health Education
American Association of University Women
American Civil Liberties Union
American College Health Association
American Humanist Association
American Public Health Association
American Social Health Association
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP)
Campaign to End AIDS
Catholics for a Free Choice
The Center for Inquiry
Choice USA
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Eta Sigma Gamma, the National Professional Health Education Honor Society
Family Planning Councils of America, Inc.
The Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR)
Girls Incorporated
Health GAP (Global Access Project)
Healthy Teen Network
HIV Medicine Association
Human Rights Campaign
International Women's Health Coalition
Jewish Women International
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund
Law Students for Choice
Legal Momentum
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
National Association of People with AIDS
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA)
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
National Minority AIDS Council
National Organization for Women
National Women's Health Network
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA)
Population Connection
Pro-Choice Public Education Project
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute for Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Society for Public Health Education

The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ–Justice and Witness Ministries
The Woodhull Freedom Foundation