

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**House of Representatives Sends the Message:
Putting Prevention Last**

Washington, DC – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations decided to increase funding for **the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) grants** despite overwhelming scientific evidence that the abstinence-only-until-marriage programs it supports do not work.

It was widely believed that the programs would be cut or eliminated by the new Congress, but by adding \$27.8 million, the House Appropriations Committee is doing President Bush's bidding and **providing \$141 million in funding to CBAE**. This is almost exactly what the President had requested, and appears to be a ploy by the Democratic majority designed to swing enough Republican votes to make the spending bill veto-proof.

“There is no other way to describe this concession but as shameful,” said William Smith, vice president for public policy at the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). “The House Appropriations Subcommittee overseeing this bill is using abstinence-only funding as a carrot to draw votes when the same thing could have been accomplished without an increase. Even the previous Republican Congress flat funded these programs two years in a row despite Bush’s request for increases. How is it then that the Democrats are now delivering up cash directly to the most extreme elements of America’s right-wing movement?”

Numerous studies have shown that abstinence-only programs have been an extraordinary waste of taxpayer money. In fact, less than two months ago, a study conducted on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found no evidence that abstinence-only programs increased rates of sexual abstinence. Students in the abstinence-only programs had a similar number of sexual partners as their peers not in the programs, as well as a similar age of first sex.

“Our hope was that the ‘Prevention First’ message touted by new Congressional leaders was more than a bumper sticker slogan. But today’s shenanigans in the House of Representatives seem to make it clear that we were wrong. The bill that has come forward today fails to fully fund HIV prevention, fails to fully fund the Minority AIDS Initiative, and fails to fully fund Title X family planning, just for starters. Yet, House leaders have seen fit to shift vital and scarce resources to extreme programs that do not work and are on the verge of collapse,” concluded Smith.

The subcommittee markup, which occurred today, will likely be followed by a full committee markup next week and a vote on the House floor following that. SIECUS would also like to recognize and thank Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Barbara Lee (D-CA) for publicly expressing their dismay at the increase for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the bill.

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