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News Release

300 advocates converge on Albany in support of women's reproductive health care and reproductive rights

Albany, N.Y. (January 12, 2009) - More than 300 advocates from around the state converged on The Capitol and the Legislative Office Building today in support of women's reproductive health during Family Planning Advocates of New York State's **Women's Health Matters! Day of Action**. Attendees heard from government leaders and keynote speaker Shelby Knox before dispersing throughout The Capitol and The Well for meetings with their legislators and visibility events outside the legislative chambers to urge elected officials to protect women's health.

Speakers included:

Hon. Sheldon Silver, Assembly Speaker

Dr. Richard Daines, New York State Commissioner of Health

Hon. Thomas DiNapoli, State Comptroller

Hon. Malcolm Smith, Senate Majority Leader

Mylan Denerstin, Executive Deputy Attorney General for Social Justice

Award recipients were:

Senator Eric Schneiderman

Assemblymember Naomi Rivera

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Keynote speaker Shelby Knox is a 23-year-old speaker and activist who travels the country in support of comprehensive sex education and youth activism.

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Investment in family planning saves New York money. "With the current legislative and executive leadership in Albany, I'm confident that New York State will continued its

investment in health care in 2009-10 and in future years," said M. Tracey Brooks, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State (FPA). "An investment in family planning provides vital health care services to New York's families and cost savings to the state." ***For every \$1 spent on family planning, \$4 is saved in Medicaid costs.***

The Healthy Teens Act will help young people make responsible health choices. In meeting with their legislators, family planning advocates from around the state urged passage of the Healthy Teens Act in this legislative session. One in four young women ages 14-19 has contracted a sexually transmitted infection, according to the CDC. The Healthy Teens Act would support schools and communities in implementing age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education so that young people receive the information they need to make safe and responsible choices.

The Reproductive Health Act will strengthen New York's reproductive rights. Advocates also asked their representatives to strengthen the state's reproductive rights laws. In the face of continued attacks on reproductive rights, it is time for New York to strengthen our laws by passing the Reproductive Health Act. This legislation will help protect the fundamental right of women to make personal and private health care decisions, including the right to choose or refuse contraception and abortion care.

In speaking to some 300 advocates from around the state, Brooks shared her personal perspective on the commitment to advances in family planning efforts. "I was born just six days before New York State legalized abortion, making me part of the first generation which has never been without the freedom of reproductive choice and an emphasis on women's reproductive health. I'm determined that I will never lose that freedom in my lifetime, and that future generations will never suffer or fear such loss."

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“We have what it takes to ensure this freedom here in New York, especially in light of the steadfast support of Speaker Sheldon Silver, the new, pro-choice majority in the Senate led by Senator Malcolm Smith, and Governor Paterson's initiative to invest in health care.”

FPA presents awards to staunch supporters. In recognition of their ongoing fight for women's reproductive rights, three New York State legislators were honored during FPA's advocacy day today. Senator Eric Schneiderman and Assemblymember Naomi Rivera were each presented with The Margaret Sanger Award, which recognizes the recipients' significant contributions to the advancement of voluntary family planning and to the concept that each child born should be wanted and loved. Sen. Schneiderman is an articulate spokesperson on the Senate floor in support of the right of women to access reproductive health care including contraception, health screenings, infertility treatment and safe, legal abortion care. He has regularly sponsored and co-sponsored women's reproductive health bills.

Assemblymember Rivera is a leading advocate for women and children. As a major supporter and champion of comprehensive sex education in her community and statewide, she is a sponsor of the Healthy Teens Act (A.358), which would provide resources for age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education.

FPA presented the Champion of Choice Award to Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, which recognizes the recipient's contributions to expanding reproductive health care choices. Stewart-Cousins and her staff have been courageous in her support of women's reproductive health care and rights in the face of constant opposition from anti-choice picketers at her district offices.

Family Planning Advocates of New York State is a non-profit, statewide organization dedicated to protecting and expanding access to the full range of reproductive health care services. It represents New York's Planned Parenthood affiliates and other family planning centers, as well as hundreds of organizations and thousands of individual members.