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News Release

On *Roe v. Wade* anniversary, comprehensive sex ed gets closer to reality as Healthy Teens Act moves out of New York's Assembly Health Committee

Albany, NY (January 22, 2009) –Today, 36 years to the day when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion with its landmark *Roe V. Wade* decision, the Healthy Teens Act (HTA) moved out of the Assembly Health Committee, the first step in making grant-funded, age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education a reality in New York State. Family Planning Advocates of New York State (FPA) has long supported comprehensive sex education in the state and passage of this bill.

The Healthy Teens Act is extremely important to the health and safety of women and families in New York. It has had overwhelming bi-partisan support in the Assembly since 2005. And, in 2008, it passed the Assembly with a margin of 130-14 but has never been brought to the floor of the Senate for a vote. During FPA's Day of Action last week, new Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith confirmed that Senate passage of HTA is a priority for him this year.

Roe V. Wade gave women the freedom to exercise their reproductive rights, and this bill gives young people the comprehensive sex education they need to make healthy, educated choices for themselves. "Seventy-two percent of New Yorkers support the Healthy Teens Act," said M. Tracey Brooks, FPA president and CEO. "Republicans, Democrats, liberals and conservatives in New York strongly agree with science-based, age-appropriate sex education."

The Healthy Teens Act does not mandate sex education, rather it establishes a grant program for schools and communities to teach sex ed. The grant program will be administered by the New York State Department of Health and will favor communities with high rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

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"We anticipate that some of the millions of federal dollars spent annually on abstinence-only programs will be made available to New York State under the Obama administration for comprehensive sex education," Brooks said. "Finally, money will be spent on proven methods of reducing teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, not on abstinence-only programs that don't work."

"Abstinence-only programs have been a \$1.5 billion failure that we're confident will come to a screeching halt under the new administration," said Brooks. With six in 10 young people in New York State having sex before graduation and one in four teenage girls having a sexually transmitted infection, comprehensive sex education is the best solution to protecting young people's health.

Research shows that comprehensive sex education helps delay the onset of intercourse, reduce the frequency of intercourse, increase condom use, and decrease the number of sexual partners.

Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act moves out of Assembly Health Committee. Another key piece of legislation also passed out of the Assembly Health Committee today. The Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act will make it easier for women to obtain emergency contraception. Currently, the availability of over-the-counter emergency contraception is restricted to those 18 and older. This bill will allow all women to obtain emergency contraception through a non-patient specific prescription from a pharmacist, registered nurse or licensed midwife, as well as require insurance policies that cover contraception to cover emergency contraception when dispensed in this manner.

"We greatly appreciate the long-standing leadership of HTA sponsors Assemblymembers Richard Gottfried and Amy Paulin," said Brooks. "And, we look forward to continuing our work with the full Assembly and the Senate in securing the passage of these important bills and ensuring the health and wellbeing of young people, women and families throughout New York," Brooks stated.

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.