

## FEDERAL FUNDING FOR ABSTINENCE-ONLY EDUCATION & CPCs

Over the last ten years, Congress has funneled over \$1.1 billion in federal dollars to failed abstinence-only education programs and so-called crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs).

CPCs first received federal funding through abstinence-only programs in 1981 when the Adolescent Family Life Act was signed into law as Title XX. Then in 1996, a portion of the federal welfare reform act known as Title V, allocated \$50 million a year in state block grants to fund abstinence-only education programs; this was yet another boon for bogus clinics.

Under the Bush Administration, abstinence-only funding increased dramatically – in 2008 over \$176 million was appropriated for abstinence-only organizations, including CPCs, despite studies commissioned by the Department of Health and Human Services showing abstinence-only programs to be ineffective. Some Congressional members have earmarked millions for abstinence-only programs and CPCs in their home states. For example, in 2008, pro-choice Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) set aside \$850,000 in earmarks for CPCs and abstinence-only education in Pennsylvania. Many states subsidize CPCs through matching funds, state-sponsored programs, specific grants and tax credits.

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The proponents (and financial beneficiaries) of abstinence-only education and CPCs in the US and around the world are large, conservative religious organizations like the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical ministries. With the help of the Bush Administration, these organizations have helped export failed abstinence-only education and CPCs around the globe. For example, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), at first a four-year \$15 billion initiative to combat HIV/AIDS globally proposed by former President Bush in 2003, required that 1/3 of the overall budget for prevention had to be spent on abstinence-only and being-faithful programs. Moreover, the program limited the distribution of condoms. In March 2009 Pope Benedict XVI publicly claimed AIDS "...cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which even aggravates the problems," while visiting sub-Saharan Africa -- where an estimated ¼ of all AIDS deaths worldwide occur each year.

### THE GOOD NEWS

This Spring Congress passed the 2009 Omnibus spending bill reducing federal funding for domestic abstinence-only education, some of which goes to fake clinics, by \$14 million (a 13% decrease). This is the first reduction in national abstinence-only education funding in over a decade.

Now is the time to make the case to Congress that abstinence-only programs in this country and around the world are a failure – according to US government studies. We must make clear these programs place the health and rights of women and men in jeopardy by discouraging the use of contraception, including condoms (despite the HIV/AIDS epidemic and rising number of new infections in the US), and by squandering precious resources that should be devoted to comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education and domestic and international family planning programs.

For the first time in years we have the opportunity to dramatically reduce the bloated abstinence-only budget pushed by the Bush Administration and return to scientifically proven strategies to reduce unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, and to increase access to reproductive health care in the US and worldwide. This year, with a new Congress and pro-choice, pro-science President, we must reduce abstinence-only education funding and instead increase funding for reproductive health services and rights worldwide.