



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE Committee on Public Health March 3, 2008

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### Senate/House Bill SB 461 - An Act Concerning Healthy Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Programs

The Department of Public Health provides the following information regarding Senate Bill 461

The Department of Public Health supports this bill to establish a teenage pregnancy prevention grant program for local and regional boards of education. Schools have long been recognized as key partners in improving the health and well being of CT youth.

There continues to be a need to offer youth repeated, consistent and medically accurate health messages to promote healthy reproductive health behaviors as results from the 2005 CT School Health Survey indicate that many of our high school students are still practicing risky behaviors that may lead to unplanned pregnancies.

The percentage of resident births to teenagers less than 20 years of age in CT have actually increased in recent years. Births to teenagers < 20 rose from 6.8% (2,881 births) in 2003 to 7.0%\* (2,900 births) in 2006. This increase in teen births mirrors a trend seen nationwide. According to preliminary data released by the National Center for Health Statistics in December 2007, the teen birth rate in the United States rose for the first time since 1991.

The burden of unplanned pregnancies to teens is great. According to the CDC, "when teens give birth, their future prospects and those of their children decline. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school and more likely to live in poverty than other teens. Pregnant teens 15-19 years are less likely to receive prenatal care and gain appropriate weight and more likely to smoke than pregnant women aged 20 years or older. These factors are also associated with poor birth outcomes."

This bill will enhance the opportunity for schools to deliver teenage pregnancy prevention programs to youth in order to decrease at-risk behaviors. Directed funding will improve planning, implementation and evaluation of these health education programs thus leading to better outcomes and efficient use of funding. In addition, DPH supports the use of medically accurate health education that follows curriculum guidelines as established by the State Department of Education.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

\* Provisional data

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