

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0906

March 23, 2009

Ranking Member Arlen Specter
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services
Education and Related Agencies
156 Dirksen Office Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Specter:

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to ensure states and local communities have a choice in their approach towards sex education for our nation's adolescents. Specifically, we appreciate your support for and protection of the current Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) program. We urge that you take the lead in making sure no changes are made to funding levels or to the program itself in the FY2010 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill.

As you know, Congress provided nearly \$95 million for CBAE in the recent FY2009 omnibus appropriations bill. While we were disappointed that this amount is lower than what the program received in FY2008, we were pleased to see ongoing bi-partisan support for a program that has demonstrated through various studies that it is effective. This funding stream will allow the positive message about abstinence to reach millions of adolescents across the country who want to be empowered with the skills necessary to maintain their sexual health and well being.

We were particularly pleased to see that the FY2009 omnibus appropriations bill maintained a distinct firewall between funding for abstinence versus funding for "comprehensive" sex education, which receives nearly four times as much money from Congress. As you may know, opponents of abstinence education have launched a public campaign to re-define CBAE in order to give programs that teach comprehensive sex education access to this program's funding. This move appears to have the support of the Obama administration. We ask that you take the lead in making sure they do not succeed. To ensure CBAE grants are administered only to groups that genuinely teach abstinence education, it is critical that funding in the FY2010 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill continue to define abstinence education programs according to Section 510(b)(2) of the Social Security Act. Commonly known as the "A-H" guidelines, this language ensures CBAE funding goes towards programs that actually teach abstinence, and not "abstinence first" or comprehensive sex education.

We also strongly support efforts to ensure abstinence education programs are scientifically accurate. We support language included in the FY2009 omnibus that requires applicants for funding to certify that materials be scientifically accurate and comply with section 317P(c)(2) of the Public Health Service Act. We believe this is a sound process that should end any discussion about whether or not programs receiving federal funding are medically or scientifically accurate. Any attempts to change this language could lead to a politically subjective process that could severely undermine the CBAE program and its purpose. We ask that you oppose any efforts aimed at amending this language.

Several studies show that students, who participate in abstinence programs delay sexual onset, reduce partners when sexually active and most important, discontinue sexual activity if previously sexually experienced. We appreciate your support for abstinence education programs and hope you will do everything possible to ensure CBAE maintains its current funding and program purpose.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Phil Manning
Pat Roberts
Mike Crapo

Jim Bunning
Baucus

