



Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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May 9, 2007

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

As you consider Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations bills, I respectfully request your support for continued funding of abstinence-until-marriage programs. With the establishment of the "A-H" standard for abstinence education prescribed in the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (42 USC §710(b)(2)), authentic abstinence education has provided a valuable alternative to programs that accept and facilitate premarital sexual activity.

Today at least 500 abstinence programs serve many thousands of young people across our country. These programs form character and educate our youth about the decisions they face, empowering them to make healthy choices that do not jeopardize their health and future. While one recent study suggested shortcomings in four such programs, many other studies have shown the positive effects of abstinence education (see: http://abstinenceassociation.org/docsNAEA_Abstinence_Works_041207.pdf; www.heritage.org/Research/Abstinence/wm738.cfm#edn3). At the same time, dozens of studies have concluded that programs promoting access to contraception and "emergency contraception" fail to reduce unintended pregnancies and abortions (see fact sheets with citations at www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/contraception/index.shtml).

Abstinence education currently receives federal funds through several distinct programs: the Adolescent Family Life Act, Title V of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and the Community-Based Abstinence Education Program (CBAE). Taken together these were appropriated the relatively modest amount of \$178 million for FY06. By one estimate, for every \$1 the federal government spends on abstinence education it already spends \$12 on "safe sex" and contraceptive programs (www.heritage.org/Research/Abstinence/bg1718.cfm). While programs incorporating the latter emphasis are sometimes called "comprehensive" sex education, they are more accurately described as compromised education: The abstinence message is mentioned, but then undermined with the false message that premature sexual experimentation does no real harm if steps are taken to avoid pregnancy.

Obviously, if that "comprehensive" or internally divided approach becomes the norm for all such education, the result will not be to expand diversity and pluralism in this field but to eliminate it. Catholic schools and other organizations truly dedicated to the message of personal responsibility and abstinence before marriage will be unable to participate in government programs. America's young people would be the real victims of this misguided approach.

Therefore I respectfully urge you to maintain current funding levels for abstinence education, as well as the current legal standards that maintain its integrity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Card. Rigali". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'J'.

Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops