



Task Force urges Congress to abandon abstinence-only sex education

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The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is urging Congress to remove abstinence-only funding from the Labor Health and Human Services Appropriation Bill, according to a press release sent Friday. The bill is to be voted on next week by the House Appropriations Committee.

While the legislation includes much-needed increases in funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, runaway and homeless youth, and domestic violence programs, it also includes large increases in abstinence-only funding for the Community Based Abstinence Education program, the government's largest abstinence-only funding program.

Several studies have shown abstinence-only sex education to be largely ineffective. In a study posted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, over 60% of men and women have had sexual intercourse by their 18th birthday. In 2005 a report released by the National Center for Health Statistics showed that just over half of American teenagers ages 15 to 19 have engaged in oral sex.

"It is appalling that anyone would even consider increasing funds for a thoroughly debunked and harmful program like abstinence-only education," Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, explained in the press release.

Abstinence-only sex education often omits information on safer-sex practices; instead, it urges teenagers to wait until marriage to have sexual intercourse. According to the press release, this approach tends to incorporate religious doctrine, inaccurate medical information, and stereotypes about the LGBT community. It completely fails to address the needs of gay and lesbian teenagers.

"The nation is counting on Congress to ensure that every adult and young person receives factual, scientifically based information about their health," Foreman contends in the press release. "Instead, we are being denied the critical information we need to protect ourselves. Congressional Democrats can and must end these programs once and for all—and do it now."