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May 9, 2007

Michael O. Leavitt  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

In a letter dated April 25, 2007, lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union's Reproductive Freedom Project brought to your attention several abstinence-only-until-marriage materials that violate federal law because they include medically inaccurate information about the effectiveness of condoms in preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs, sometimes referred to as sexually transmitted diseases or STDs). (See attached.) We are writing to alert you to similar violations in federally funded programs in Illinois and to ask that you take appropriate steps to remedy this problem.

We have strong reason to believe that many popular abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula used by recipients of federal funding in Illinois violate the Public Health Services Act (42 U.S.C. § 247b-17(c)(2)). These include A.C. Green's Game Plan and Aspire. Like the materials named in the April 25<sup>th</sup> letter, the curricula used in our state omit vital information about condom effectiveness and contain inaccuracies suggesting that condoms fail to protect against infection, when in fact they are highly effective at doing so. For example, A.C. Green's Game Plan suggests that condoms are ineffective by comparing misleading graphs showing condom usage rates and STD rates. It also incorrectly states that condoms are ineffective in protecting against human papilloma virus.

We are concerned that the above federally supported abstinence-only-until-marriage programs not only violate federal law but put teens at risk. Evidence shows that programs that both teach abstinence and include complete and medically accurate information about how to effectively use contraceptives, including condoms, can delay sexual activity and increase contraceptive use among teens. We hope that HHS will take this opportunity to closely examine all education materials currently used by recipients of federal abstinence-only funding and ensure that they comply with federal law. Teens need accurate information about condom effectiveness as well as other vital information about sex and sexuality in order to make healthy choices.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorie Chaiten". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Lorie Chaiten  
Director, Reproductive Rights Project