

Prevention makes more sense

Letters to the editor
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Parents, talk to your teenagers. Tell them you just heard that May is Teen Pregnancy Month, and use that as an opportunity to point out the life-altering consequences of unintended pregnancy. Mothers and fathers who talk to their sons and daughters are making great strides in reducing the number of teen pregnancies. Over the last decade, the teen pregnancy rate has dropped by 40 percent.

Fortunately, parents are not alone in these efforts. Our success in reducing unintended pregnancies has come from the combined efforts of a great coalition of parents, educators, advocates and health care professionals.

Many of the front-line leaders in this effort lend their talents and skills through the Planned Parenthood centers. Here on the North Coast, we're fortunate to have centers at Six Rivers, Shasta Diablo and Golden Gate centers. When a teen gets pregnant, she creates a ripple effect of unintended consequences. Her education often suffers. Her family life is often strained, both emotionally and financially. She may lower her expectations in life. Her child is more likely than average to live in poverty.

And it does not end there. There is a larger social price and a shared economic price. A budget analysis by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy estimates that California taxpayers spend nearly \$900 million a year on care and costs related to teen pregnancy. That's nearly a billion dollars that we could be spending on education or healthcare, or anything else to make a better life for our young people.

Assemblywoman Patty Berg (D-Eureka)

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