



## **Statement of Support for H.R. 3312**

### **Health Services Association of California Community Colleges**

**September 18, 2009**

The Health Services Association California Community Colleges (HSACCC) is pleased support H.R. 3312, the “Preventing Unintended Pregnancies, Reducing the Need for Abortion, and Supporting Parents Act.” This is an important bill to improve access to reproductive health services and information, including efforts to reduce unplanned pregnancies.

The California Community Colleges is the largest higher educational system in the nation, comprised of 72 districts and 110 colleges, serving more than 2.7 million students per year. The system supplies workforce training, basic skills education, prepares students for transfer to 4-year institutions and offers opportunities for personal enrichment and lifelong learning. As a professional organization composed of community college student health service program directors, HSACCC’s mission is to support and foster student access to quality health services within the California Community Colleges. Student health services are an important asset on college campuses because they support the academic success of students and often serve as the primary or only place where they can seek health care.

As college health professionals, we understand that reproductive health care is a priority health issue for our students, given that the majority are sexually active, tend to delay marriage, and are often not interested in becoming pregnant until later in life. We recognize the important link between health and student achievement, and in our role as campus public health experts, we take seriously the task of ensuring students remain in school by having the ability to control their fertility and family planning options.

Much of the research examining sexual and reproductive health behavior among college students focuses on traditional 4-year campuses, with limited data on community college students. Similarly, there has been relatively little focus to date on addressing unplanned pregnancy among community college students. Therefore, we applaud Representatives Ryan and DeLauro for including language that supports targeted demonstration grants to prevent unplanned pregnancies at community colleges.

Recent data from the 2007 National College Health Assessment (NCHA) in which 13 California community colleges participated, revealed a number of alarming sexual and reproductive health behaviors and outcomes for California community college students. For instance, these community college students reported a high rate (5.4%) of unintended pregnancy, a figure more than twice (2.4%)

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that of the national NCHA cohort (which consists mainly of four year colleges and universities). Further, more than one in five (21.3%) sexually active students reported that they or their partners have used emergency contraception within the last school year, which is 1.5 times higher than the overall NCHA cohort (14.1% ). This indicates that community college students are at high risk for unplanned pregnancy. Student health services programs are in a unique position to help divert unplanned pregnancies and reduce the need for abortions through health promotion, clinical services, and prevention programs.

The Health Services Association of California Community Colleges (HSACCC) is pleased to support H.R. 3312 and looks forward to working with other advocates to address these pressing public health issues and providing support to our students to achieve their academic potential.

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