



August 3, 2011

The Honorable Jared Polis  
U.S. House of Representatives  
501 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Judy Chu  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1520 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Reps. Polis and Chu:

On behalf of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, I commend your efforts to improve student success and achievement for pregnant and parenting teens by introducing H.R. 2617, the *Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act of 2011*. This bill provides important resources and access to essential services, including teen pregnancy prevention and family planning services, and removes barriers that pregnant and parenting teens face while trying to complete their education.

The National Campaign is a research-based, bi-partisan, and non-profit group that was founded in 1996. Our goal is to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families; our specific strategy for reaching this goal is to prevent teen pregnancy as well as unplanned pregnancy, especially among single, young adults.

Given that teen pregnancy and school dropout are closely associated, helping teens avoid early pregnancy in the first place, supporting pregnant and parenting teens, and helping these young parents delay subsequent pregnancy will help students achieve their educational goals. At present, fully 30 percent of teen girls cite pregnancy or parenting as a key factor in dropping out of school and in fact only 40 percent of teen moms finish high school. Nearly 20 percent of teen births are to teens who already have at least one child, making it that much more challenging to succeed with their education. The connection between teen and unplanned pregnancy and academic achievement extends to postsecondary institutions as well. Less than two percent of teen moms finish college by age 30 and 61 percent of women who have children after enrolling in community college fail to finish their degree—a rate 65 percent higher than the rate for those who didn't have children.

Too-early pregnancy and parenthood not only makes it more difficult for young parents to complete education, career, and other life goals, but it also affects the educational prospects of their children. Compared to children born to parents who are older, children born to teen parents do not

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[SexReally.com](http://SexReally.com) | [TheNationalCampaign.org](http://TheNationalCampaign.org) | [StayTeen.org](http://StayTeen.org) | [Bedsider.org](http://Bedsider.org)

perform as well on measures of child development and school readiness, are 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade, and are more likely to drop out of high school.

The lower educational achievement of teen parents and their children has serious consequences for our economy and the strength of our workforce. For example, teen childbearing costs taxpayers at least \$10.9 billion annually, and roughly a third of this reflects lower taxes paid by the children of teen mothers over their own adult lifetimes as a result of lower education and earnings.

We commend your leadership in connecting teen pregnancy and student success with the introduction of the *Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act*. This is an important step in getting education and other public agencies at the federal, state, and local level to collaborate in the prevention of teen pregnancy and school dropout. We are particularly pleased that H.R. 2617 explicitly requires state-level coordination of services with “teen pregnancy prevention, family planning, and maternal and child health programs.” Providing comprehensive support services for teen parents to help ensure that an additional pregnancy does not delay or derail students’ chances to complete their educational goals is essential. We also support the collection of information about state and local efforts to prevent teen pregnancy and the nature and extent of barriers to educational access and success facing pregnant and parenting students. To better understand what communities are doing in this area will enhance efforts to help make sure students graduate high school and are college and career ready.

Thank you for your commitment to these critical issues. We appreciate your staff’s dedication, and look forward to continuing to work together on this and other efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact Lisa Shuger, Director of Public Policy, at (202) 478-8576 or at [lshuger@thenc.org](mailto:lshuger@thenc.org) if we can be of further assistance to you or your staff.

Sincerely,



Sarah S. Brown

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