

April 4, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, S-221
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leaders Reid and McConnell, Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi:

As former Members of Congress who have been affiliated with The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (“The National Campaign”), we write to underscore the importance of maintaining funding for research-based efforts to prevent teen pregnancy. Specifically, we are concerned about the recent elimination of the \$110 million, evidence-based Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative in H.R. 1 that passed the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011.

Teen pregnancy rates have declined by about a third since the early 1990s; yet, it is still the case that three in ten girls in this country will become pregnant before the age of 20. The United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancies in the developed world—more than 700,000 pregnancies to teens each year. At a time when the U.S. needs to become more competitive in the global economy, our teen pregnancy rates are still much higher than our trading partners and competitors, which means our young people have less opportunity to get the education and skills they need to compete.

Since the program was first funded and administered by the OAH in Fiscal Year 2010, more than 100 organizations have received grants to operate programs that not only help reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, but also equip youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to lead productive lives. Furthermore, these grantees are poised to serve more than 800,000 youth over the next four years.

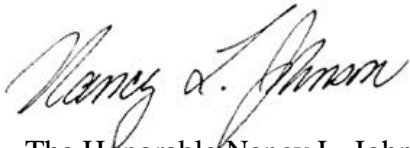
Moreover, Americans overwhelmingly support programs like the OAH Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative. Nearly nine in ten adults (89%) say that there should be direct efforts in their communities to prevent teen pregnancy. Communities all over the country are working hard to address this challenge and the OAH funding offers a critical source of funding to do so. As evidence of this, in 2010, more than 1,000 organizations applied for grant funding from the program: clearly demand far exceeds supply, and losing this federal funding would undermine the important efforts taking place around the country.

In addition to reducing teen pregnancy which thereby reduces the number of abortions, these initiatives also contribute to progress on a host of other critical issues that are important to Americans, such as ensuring that each young person in this country can complete his or her education. Less than half of teen parents (40%) go on to finish high school, and less than two percent will complete college by the time they turn 30. Nine in ten adults and teens themselves say that reducing teen pregnancy is a very effective way to reduce the high school dropout rate and improve academic achievement.

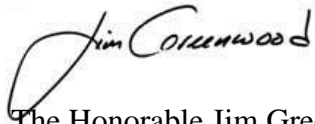
Simply put, eliminating funding to prevent teen pregnancy in the name of fiscal responsibility is penny-wise and pound foolish. A study by The National Campaign found that in 2004, teen childbearing cost U.S. taxpayers at least \$9.1 billion. The same study estimated that the U.S. realized \$6.7 billion in savings because of the declines in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 2004. Moreover, a recent analysis by the Brookings Institution determined that replicating effective teen pregnancy prevention programs, such as those supported by the OAH grants, is cost-beneficial—in other words, these federal outlays save more public funding than they cost.

As former Members who have a long-standing commitment to preventing teen pregnancy, we strongly support the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative because it is a funding stream that both emphasizes evidence and evaluation and funds programs that work. We certainly recognize the difficult budget decisions facing this Congress, but we hope that a program that both saves money and contributes to other important goals will receive continued support. This is something that we believe elected officials from both parties, and those who are pro-life and pro-choice, should all be able to endorse.

Sincerely,



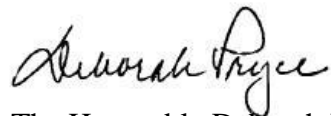
The Honorable Nancy L. Johnson (R-CT)



The Honorable Jim Greenwood (R-PA)



The Honorable Connie Morella (R-MD)



The Honorable Deborah Pryce (R-OH)