

March 18, 2003

**Legislators' Quotes in Response to
No Time for Complacency: Teen Births in California**

Assembly Majority Floor Leader Marco Antonio Firebaugh, D-Los Angeles (50th Assembly District), Chair of the California Latino Legislative Caucus

"This study gives every legislator a definitive picture of the impact that teen pregnancies are having on their districts and their constituents," said Assembly Majority Floor Leader Marco Antonio Firebaugh, and Chair of the California Latino Legislative Caucus. "This is an issue that all legislators must continue to take seriously."

-from PHI press release

Senator Dean Florez, D-Fresno (16th Senate District)

"It's disappointing," Florez says. "Clearly, Sacramento has turned a blind eye to this problem because we're cutting those types of programs." Florez says that poverty also plays a part and his district includes some of the lowest per capita areas in the state. He says high school dropout rates, and high infant mortality are other long standing issues that need work. "The Central Valley is constantly left behind when it comes to funding," Florez says.

-from Fresno Bee story by Donald E. Coleman

Assembly Member Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley (14th Assembly District)

"We know that prevention programs pay for themselves many times in down-the-road costs. We do have to make significant cuts, but they should be cuts that are not in proven programs of prevention."

-from Contra Costa Times story by Matt Krupnick

Carina Franck, Field Representative for Senator Joseph Dunn, D-Orange County (34th Senate District)

Dunn agreed with the report's recommendation, which calls for an increase in education programs that teach medically accurate information in sexual education classes. Dunn is backing legislation to change the California education code to require more effective sex education in schools.

-from Orange County Register story by Mayrav Saar

Senator Gloria Romero, D-Rosemead (24th Senate District)

In reviewing the information from the study, state Sen. Gloria Romero, D-Rosemead, said this public health issue has been scrutinized by the Legislature for a long time. Romero said the results were interesting. "I was surprised the 24th District was ranked ninth, I was expecting it to be higher," she said of her district. "School districts in L.A. County are assertive in addressing the needs of pregnant teens. Girls' education dreams are being preserved. It's not the bleak picture it once was, but we have a long way to go."

-from March 13 San Gabriel Valley Tribune story by Karen Rubin

"I wish I could say pregnant teen programs will not be cut, but they will be cut. There are going to be across-the-board cuts. We are going to be faced with cuts in all of these programs that successfully reduced the teen pregnancy rate."

-from March 17 San Gabriel Valley Tribune story by Karen Rubin

Assembly Member Sarah Reyes, D-Fresno (31st Assembly District)

“The only way we can attack an increase in teen pregnancy is through education,” Reyes says. “We’ve been No. 1 or No. 2 since I’ve been elected. We need more education among women to let them know it’s not easy to be a teen mother.”

-from Fresno Bee story by Donald E. Coleman

Senator William “Pete” Knight, R-Hesperia (17th Senate District)

“I think the emphasis we’ve been putting on teen pregnancy has been paying off and we should stay with it,” said state Senator W. ‘Pete’ Knight, R-Hesperia. “But I will also be asking that we move in the direction of supporting an abstinence program,” he said. “We need to impress on the kids that the only real safe and positive way is through abstinence.”

-from San Bernardino County Sun story by Annette Wells

Senator Nell Soto, D-Ontario (32nd Senate District)

“We have to leave this money in the budget,” said state Sen. Nell Soto, D-Ontario, whose 32nd District had the fourth highest teenage birth rate in the state in 2000 - 73.9 births per 1,000 teenage girls between ages 15 and 19. “But where is the money going to come from?” Soto asked. “ We have to look at what programs we value more than others. I don’t know of a better one than this one, especially if it is working.” Soto said she plans to write a letter to the state Department of Health Services, in light of the Institute’s study, seeking help in keeping funds in teen prevention programs. She also plans to set up a round-table discussion with elected officials, parents, adolescents and others concerned about teenage pregnancies. “It isn’t going to go away. It is going to get worse,” she said. “And I know I can’t change behaviors.”

-from San Bernardino County Sun story by Annette Wells