



Pro-Life Activities

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARDINAL URGES CONGRESS TO CONTINUE FUNDING ABSTINENCE PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Justin Rigali has urged the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to maintain continued funding levels for abstinence education for young people, as well as the current legal standards that maintain its integrity.

In a letter to the committees as they consider Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations bills, the Cardinal said that “authentic abstinence education has provided a valuable alternative to programs that accept and facilitate premarital sexual activity.”

The Cardinal is Archbishop of Philadelphia and Chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee for Pro-Life Activities.

Cardinal Rigali said there are at least 500 abstinence programs serving many thousands of young people throughout the country. “These programs form character and educate our youth about the decisions they face, empowering them to make healthy choices that do not jeopardize their health and future,” he stated.

Abstinence education currently receives federal funds through several distinct programs: the Adolescent Family Life Act, Title V of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and the Community-Based Abstinence Education Program (CBAE). By one estimate, for every \$1 the federal government spends on abstinence education it spends \$12 on “safe sex” and contraceptive programs.

“While programs incorporating the latter emphasis are sometimes called ‘comprehensive’ sex education, they are more accurately described as compromised education: the abstinence

message is mentioned, but then undermined with the false message that premature sexual experimentation does no real harm if steps are taken to avoid pregnancy,” Cardinal Rigali wrote.

“Obviously, if that ‘comprehensive’ or internally divided approach becomes the norm for all such education, the result will not be to expand diversity and pluralism in this field but to eliminate it,” the Cardinal said. “Catholic schools and other organizations truly dedicated to the message of personal responsibility and abstinence before marriage will be unable to participate in government programs. America’s young people would be the real victims of this misguided approach.”

The full text of the Cardinal’s letter is available at

<http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/contraception/abstinencefunding.pdf>.

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