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News Release from
Congressman Henry A. Waxman

For Immediate Release

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NEW REPORT FINDS THAT ABSTINENCE-ONLY CURRICULA CONTAIN FALSE AND MISLEADING INFORMATION

A new report released today by Rep. Henry A. Waxman shows that many federally funded abstinence-only education programs teach adolescents false and misleading information about reproductive health. Under the Bush Administration, federal funding for these abstinence-only programs has grown rapidly. In fiscal year 2005, the federal government will spend $170 million on abstinence-only education, more than twice the amount spent in fiscal year 2001.

Today's report examines the scientific and medical accuracy of the most popular abstinence-only curricula used by programs receiving funds from the largest federal abstinence initiative. The report finds that over two-thirds of these federally funded abstinence programs rely on curricula that distort information about the effectiveness of contraceptives, misrepresent the risks of abortion, blur religion and science, treat stereotypes about girls and boys as scientific fact, and contain basic scientific errors.

"It is absolutely vital that the health education provided to America's youth be scientifically and medically accurate," said Rep. Waxman. "The abstinence-only programs reviewed in this report fail to meet this standard. Something is seriously wrong when federal tax dollars are being used to mislead kids about basic health facts."

Unlike comprehensive sex education, abstinence-only programs have not been shown to decrease rates of teen pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease. In fact, a recent study found that youth who pledge abstinence are significantly less likely to make informed choices about precautions when they do have sex. The serious and pervasive misinformation in abstinence-only curricula may help explain these findings.

The complete report is available at http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov.