

REMARKS BY SENATOR MARTIN J. GOLDEN AT HEALTHY RESPECT MEDICAL SYMPOSIUM

Monday, September 17, 2007, 6:30 p.m.

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Good Evening. Thank you for inviting me to join with you at this medical symposium here today hosted by Healthy Respect.

I commend the organization and your membership for your efforts, day in and day out, to promote a society of respect and healthy living among the teenagers here in New York. Because it is imperative that we teach these important life lessons at an early age, so that from their youth, the teenagers of our City will lead better lifestyles and thus, our society as a whole will be positively impacted.

The goals of Healthy Respect include the desire to raise awareness of crisis surrounding teenage sexual activity. Because it truly is a crisis, one effecting our society, our culture and our future.

It is estimated that each year, 750,000 teenage women become pregnant between the ages of 15-19, with teenage pregnancy abortion rates among the highest here in New York State, with 50% of more of teenage pregnancy resulting in abortion. And further evidence points to the fact that teens are at high risk for getting an STD.

So our efforts to promote abstinence is twofold, and in doing so, we prevent teenage pregnancy and we are preventing the spread of STDs among our population.

In doing so, we are taking the stand that society here in America, that life here in New York, that here in Brooklyn, we want to cultivate a culture that limits these both. And Healthy Respect, through their programs, has spread this message throughout six schools in Yonkers and right here in Brooklyn, so we are making a difference and we must continue to.

If we do not, if we throw our hands up and concede to this serious problem that threatens our society and our desire to foster a community of life here in New York, then we are to blame for the problems of unhealthy people amongst us in society. So we need to devote our efforts to promote life and prevent abortion and sexually transmitted diseases and the damaging effects that teenage pregnancy has on society.

Reports show that teenage mothers are one third less likely to complete high school and even more alarming is that only 1.5% of teenage mothers have a college degree.

And the children of teenage mothers have a tendency to have lower birth weights, are at greater risk for abuse and neglect, and sons of teenage mothers are 13% more likely to find themselves in prison, and 22% of daughters of teenage mothers are themselves likely to become teenage mothers.

In your efforts to provide abstinence education in Brooklyn, Yonkers and throughout New York, you are making a difference and will continue to change these numbers for the better, and I encourage you to continue and expand these educational programs for the good of society.

Because abstinence education works, and therefore, we must continue to do our very best to promote its presence in our schools and communities.

We must seek to obtain higher levels of funding so that we can get this important message of abstinence out to the youth of our City and our State in an effort to change the current statistics, to reverse the trend, and to establish a society where we foster love and affection for our newborns.

And where we foster a healthier lifestyle free of STDs for the youth and the teenagers of our society. And the data shows that young boys and girls who have engaged in sexual activity actually wish they had waited. A recent survey shows that 8 out of 10 teenage girls and 6 out of 10 teenage boys wish they had waited.

These numbers make it even more crucial that we get this message of abstinence to teenagers before it is too late. I commend the efforts and work of Healthy Respect, including that of John Margand and Dr. Coppola, who have and continue to advocate for abstinence. You have chosen a noble mission within society to make a difference and a significant impact.

We must stand up to the forces that believe that abstinence is a thing of the past and we must show the world that in fact, we can return the teenagers of Brooklyn, of New York and beyond, back to this lifestyle.

It will take a great deal of work, some of which has already been done, but you have laid the foundation to build upon.

We will see the numbers declining. We will see the reported cases of teenage pregnancies reduced and in limiting this, we are in fact doing a great service to all the world, to families, and to individuals.

Because there is no greater gift than that of life. But bringing life into this world comes with great responsibility and work.

We must work to insure that we bring about this trend in our society, so that we can create a more sound society, both medically and economically, and socially.

Thank you for your efforts. Lets continue to work together to promote abstinence and health.