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RELEASE: JULY 3, 1986

WHAT CAUSES TEENAGE PREGNANCY?

Giving free contraceptives and abortions to teenagers increases the number of pregnancies. Yes, you read that sentence correctly. Publicly-funded contraceptives and abortions increase -- do NOT reduce -- the rate of teenage pregnancies.

But how can that be? Isn't their very purpose to prevent pregnancies? And, isn't it logical to believe that more contraceptives will stop more conceptions? Maybe that's the motive of it and maybe that's the logic of it, but the facts prove otherwise.

We are indebted to economics Professor Jacqueline R. Kasun, Ph.D., for her research and scholarly analysis of the statistical data on teenage pregnancy. When facts collide with purpose or logic, reasonable people should face reality.

The 50 American states vary widely in teenage pregnancy rates and also in per capita government spending on birth control and abortions. California spends three times as much per capita on birth control as North Dakota and five times as much as Utah. Yet, California's pregnancy rate is twice as high as those states.

Four states are the leaders in publicly-funded birth control: California, Hawaii, Georgia, and New York. California, for example, spends 227 percent of the national average; the other three states spend well above the national average. All four provide abortions at public expense, and they provide contraceptives and abortions to minors without parental consent or notification.

When we look at the rate of abortions-plus-unmarried-births to teenagers in these four states as a percentage of the national average, we find that these same four states are also in the lead. The California rate is 150 percent of the national average, New York's is 135 percent, Hawaii's is 134 percent, and Georgia's is 131 percent.

There are large racial differences in pregnancy for all age groups, including teenagers, and states have widely different proportions of minorities. To avoid the statistical distortions caused by these differences, Dr. Kasun examined and compared the pregnancy rates of white teenagers in those states where the white population includes

less than 6 percent Latin Americans.

Using reliable published sources, Dr. Kasun then prepared a table comparing per capita public expenditures on birth control (consisting of per capita state and federal expenditures on contraceptives and abortions) with the pregnancy rate of white teenagers (consisting of the rate of abortions-plus-unmarried-births among white women, age 15-19).

The correlation is amazing! The states that spend the most on contraceptives and abortions tend to have the highest rate of teenage abortions-plus-unmarried-births, namely, Georgia, Vermont, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The states that spend the least on contraceptives and abortions also have the lowest rate of abortions-plus-unmarried-births, namely, Utah, South Dakota, Idaho, North Dakota, and Missouri.

A great deal of press was given to a report which alleges that the teenage pregnancy rate is higher in the United States than in foreign countries. However, the American states that spend lower-than-average amounts on government-funded birth control programs and do NOT provide teenagers with free access to abortions and contraceptives have about the same rates of abortions-plus-unmarried-births as England, France, Sweden, and Canada.

California has consistently spent far more on birth control, per capita as well as in total, than any other state. The California State Office of Family Planning started with $4 million in 1971; by 1983 California was spending $95 million a year on contraceptives, sterilizations, and abortions. That was one-fifth of the national total, although California has only one-tenth of the U.S. population.

In addition, California has promoted sex education at all grade levels, sent pregnancy counselors into public schools, and provided and promoted contraceptives and abortions to teenagers at public expense without parental knowledge. Students are excused from school to obtain abortions without notifying parents.

The result? California's teenage pregnancy rate is now 30 percent above the national level, and California's teenage abortion rate is now 60 percent above the national level.

By contrast, when other states reduced their spending on birth control or required parental consent for minors to get birth control or abortions, pregnancy rates and abortion rates fell dramatically.

The evidence thus shows that government birth control increases teenage pregnancies, but restrictions on teenage access to birth control can reduce pregnancies.