



*Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund*



NATIONAL LATINA INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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## **Legislation Aims To Decrease Teen Pregnancy and Dating Violence Among Young People of Color**

Washington, DC – Recognizing the need for a broader approach to address teen pregnancy in communities of color, including the role coercion and violence plays in unintended pregnancy, legislators today introduced a bill to help young people of color get information and skills they need to build healthy relationships.

The “Communities of Color Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Act of 2011” introduced today by U.S. Representative and Chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Health Task Force, Lucille Roybal-Allard (D, CA-34), and Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA). Both are long-time champions of efforts to reduce health disparities and violence among Latinos and other ethnic communities. The bill breaks ground as the first federal program to integrate teen dating violence prevention and teen pregnancy prevention, and in recognizing the need of racial or ethnic minority and immigrant communities for culturally appropriate information and education on these issues.

In 2009 the teen birth rate for Latinas, African Americans and American Indians/Alaska Natives was more than double the teen birth rate of non-Hispanic Caucasians. However, disparities in contraceptive use are closely connected to social and economic inequities in communities of color; for example, a Latina girl is three times more likely to be without health insurance than her white counterpart.

“Myths -- rather than realities -- have too often guided the public discourse about Latinas and pregnancy,” said Maria Elena Perez, Interim Executive Director at the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health. “Young women of color in general, and particularly immigrant young women, have less access to the health care and information they need to be able to make the reproductive choices that are right for them.”

The number of teens facing violence and coercion is equally striking, with 1 in 4 adolescents reporting emotional, physical, or sexual violence each year. Adolescent girls in physically abusive relationships are three times more likely to become pregnant than non-abused girls.

“Dating violence is a growing crisis among our teens ,” said Esta Soler, Founder and President of Futures Without Violence, formerly the Family Violence Prevention Fund. “Teens in abusive relationships are at significantly higher risk for unintended pregnancy, poor pregnancy outcomes, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. These can be reduced if we teach young people how to create and build healthy relationships.”

The Communities of Color Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Act would:

- fund teenage pregnancy prevention program interventions with a focus on supporting community-based organizations that have experienced barriers in accessing federal teen pregnancy prevention funding and can serve youth in ethnic and racial groups with the highest teen pregnancy rates;
- fund multimedia public education and awareness about teen pregnancy and related social and emotional issues, such as violence prevention;
- study factors that contribute to disproportionately high rates of teenage and unintended pregnancy in communities of color, and the role that violence and abuse play in the decisions young people make about relationships, sex, pregnancy, and childbearing.

The legislation has been advocated by the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, Futures Without Violence (formerly the Family Violence Prevention Fund), and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

“It is essential to provide youth the information and skills they need to reduce teenage pregnancies and decrease teen violence,” said Soler. “This groundbreaking legislation will give our young people support to build healthy relationships and improve their overall health and well-being.”

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[National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health](#) is the nation’s only reproductive health policy and advocacy organization working on behalf of the reproductive health and justice of the nation's Latina women.

[Futures Without Violence](#), formerly the Family Violence Prevention Fund, works to end violence against women and children around the world, because every person has the right to live free of violence. The organization’s [kNOwMore initiative](#) seeks to reduce the consequences of reproductive coercion and violence.