

Abstinence funds target of debate

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Health researchers from U.S. academic institutions issued a letter to Congress seeking a reduction in or elimination of funds targeted for abstinence education. Citing "multiple scientific and ethical problems," the letter questions the viability of withholding "potentially life-saving information" regarding birth control and the neglecting the health issues of homosexual, bisexual and transgender youths, the Washington Times reported Wednesday. "We strongly urge Congress to reconsider federal support for abstinence-only education programs and policies," the letter concludes, followed by the signatures of health researchers from Columbia University, Yale and four other institutions. The U.S. government allocated more than \$200 million for abstinence education, the Times said. President Bush, however, vetoed a \$606 billion bill for exceeding expectations on discretionary spending, including abstinence education. Congressional aids said the abstinence funds were "a likely target" for cuts in the bill, but the National Abstinence Education Association issued pleas to Congress, asking it to preserve the funding, saying lower teen pregnancy and birth rates indicate the program is effective.

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