



Independent Democratic Conference

News from the Independent Democratic Conference
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***Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein, IDC, and TV Star Padma Lakshmi Kick-off Teen Health Awareness Campaign in Albany
Launch New Online Survey for Teens, www.TeenHealthNY.com, to Inform Policy Makers and Announce New Education Fund to Direct Resources***

Albany, NY -- At the State Capitol on Wednesday, Padma Lakshmi, host of Bravo TV's *Top Chef* and co-founder of the Endometriosis Foundation of America, joined Senate Majority Coalition Leader Jeffrey D. Klein and members of the Senate's Independent Democratic Conference to kick-off a Teen Health Awareness Campaign. The campaign focuses on reducing adolescent obesity, educating students about the health consequences of short and long-term alcohol and substance abuse, and raising awareness among young women and health professionals about endometriosis, an often undiagnosed but debilitating disease. March is Endometriosis month. At the press conference, Senator Klein was joined by seventh graders from JHS 141, a middle school in the Riverdale section of the Bronx.

As part of the awareness campaign, the Independent Democratic Conference launched a new online survey, www.TeenHealthNY.Com, which encourages young New Yorkers to "weigh-in" on how much they know about these important health issues. TeenHealthNY.com will provide policymakers with input straight from the source about where additional educational resources may be needed. Additional educational resources for these three health areas will be provided through a newly created Healthy Teen Awareness and Education Fund. The IDC, which included the Fund as part of this year's Senate budget resolution, is hoping to raise as much as \$1 million for the Fund's programs through voluntary taxpayer donations, beginning next year. If enacted in the state's final budget package this year, the Healthy Teen Awareness and Education Fund will appear as a "check-off box" on all future state income tax forms. The check-off box will enable New Yorkers to make donations directly on their tax form.

Senate Majority Coalition Leader and Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeffrey D. Klein said, "Focusing on our teens' health is critical to New York's future. By learning more about where our current health education is lacking, we can more effectively and efficiently distribute these additional resources. The purpose of the Teen Health Fund is simple -- we want to give kids the tools they need to make smart choices about their health. By creating this fund and directing resources where they're needed, we can ensure that New York students are being given a full spectrum of health education. I'm excited to launch this online survey today. Based on the success of our Cyber Bully Census, we know that online surveys can be a very powerful tool for kids and lawmakers."

Padma Lakshmi, co-Founder of the Endometriosis Foundation of America and award winning author said, "We must educate our children in a broader, more comprehensive manner. If we are to prepare our youth for a bright future we must ensure their physical and emotional well being is addressed before we can raise their academic levels and intellect. This focus on health should include sex education that openly speaks about issues such as endometriosis to both genders at a critical time in a young person's life. The value of such education helps not only these adolescents but whomever their lives should touch."

Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) said, "We need to begin having a real conversation as to how we can appropriately reduce the growing health risks facing our children today. We are concerned over the alarming rates of obesity in adolescents, the prevalence of endometriosis, and the abundance and popularity of substance abuse in our communities. These issues are both physical and psychological in nature, and it is my hope that through public awareness and engagement initiatives on the statewide level, we can begin to reverse these trends and ensure a safer and healthier environment for everyone."

Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) said, "It is critical to the health of our kids, and critical to the health of our state, that we create programs which focus on a healthier future for our teens. By starting these programs, we are helping hundreds and thousands of kids across New York battle obesity, substance abuse, and Endometriosis."

Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn) said, "Nothing is more important than the health and future of our kids. Today, we've highlighted several issues that have been severely underrepresented. Young women shouldn't have to go through years of pain and discomfort simply because there they and their healthcare providers may not know enough about Endometriosis. By creating the programs like this one, the IDC is empowering teens to make the right choices. I'm proud to support the Independent Democratic Conference's Teen Health Education Awareness Fund and Survey."

Senator Malcolm Smith (D-Queens) said, "I am happy to launch the IDC's Teen Health programs with fellow healthcare advocates and Senate leaders. This initiative provides more health education to our young men and women, and equips them with the tools they need to make healthy choices. Programs like this are a great investment in New York's future."

Assemblyman Marcos Crespo (D-85th District) said, "Senator Jeff Klein's relentless work on chronic illnesses now taking a heavy toll on our residents and stressing our health care delivery system is welcomed leadership that will force positive change in the way health care is delivered in our State. To combat alarming rates of obesity, asthma, cardiovascular diseases, and substance abuse we must focus our efforts on problems which can no longer be ignored for the sake of our families, as well as to protect the financial stability of our health care system. I'm proud to join Senator Klein in his effort to reshape healthcare in New York," stated Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, member of the Assembly Standing Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

Director of Urban Health Plans Paloma Hernandez said, "By developing healthy habits at a young age, our children stand a great chance of living long, healthy lives. But not only that. By educating young people about the dangers of obesity and diabetes, we can help prevent many of the worst health problems before they start. Thanks to Senator Klein's leadership, the Urban Health Plan Center will be able to reach more young people and their parents and to teach them about the benefits of leading a healthy life."

Greg Tau, Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Columbia University and New York State Psychiatric Institute said, "Because problems with alcohol and drug use most often begin their destructive life-long course in adolescence, it is critical we focus our efforts at prevention, intervention, treatment and research at this age group. It is a tragedy that health providers, parents, educators and other adults in the lives of teens affected by drugs and alcohol feel powerless because of the woeful lack of resources, and many communities remain wary of prevention through education. For these reasons, the Teen Health Education Fund launched by Senator Jeffrey Klein and the Independent Democratic Caucus is timely and important step that helps bridge this gap between services and needs in New York State."

Jackie Negri, Executive Director to the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus said, "The Association of New York State Youth Bureaus applauds Senator Jeff Klein and the Independent Democratic Conference for funding a "Teen Health Awareness Campaign". By reaching out directly to youth in youth development settings and by encouraging them to better manage their eating and exercise habits, we can directly impact decisions and behavior in ways that can significantly improve life habits, overall health and the self-esteem necessary for them to succeed."