

No woman should be pressured by a lack of resources and support to choose between her education and her children.

## **Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act**

The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act would establish a pilot program to provide grants to encourage eligible institutions of higher education to establish and operate pregnant and parenting student services offices for pregnant students, parenting students, prospective parenting students anticipating a birth or adoption, and students who place a child for adoption.

A school that receives a grant under this Act will first host an initial pregnancy and parenting resource forum to assess resources on the campus and in the local community, including maternity coverage and the availability of riders for additional family members in student health care; housing; child care; flexible or alternative academic scheduling, such as telecommuting programs; education to improve parenting skills for mothers and fathers and to strengthen marriages; resources to assist parents and prospective parents in meeting the material needs of their children; and post-partum counseling and support groups. The forum will also be used to set goals for improving resources and improving access to those resources. The performance of the pregnant and parenting student services office in providing or referring students to these resources will be assessed every year.

### **The inspiration for this legislation: Feminists for Life's College Outreach Program.**

In the tradition of Susan B. Anthony, Feminists for Life's College Outreach Program works to systematically eliminate the root causes of abortion—primarily the lack of practical resources and support—through holistic, women-centered solutions.

Feminists for Life launched its College Outreach Program in 1994. After visiting numerous campuses, Feminists for Life President Serrin Foster noted that she had never seen a visibly pregnant or parenting student. Again and again, students and professors confirmed that seeing a pregnant woman on campus—including professors on a tenure track—was an extreme rarity.

In 1995 a Feminists for Life board member first shared the story of her own struggle when she became pregnant in graduate school. She did not want an abortion. As she considered her options she realized: *"Without housing on campus for me and my baby, without on-site day care, without maternity coverage in my health insurance, it sure doesn't feel like I have much of a free choice."* Sadly, she miscarried under the stress.

**"Abortion is a reflection that we have not met the needs of women.  
Women deserve better."**

*FFL President Serrin M. Foster*

Inspired by this story and the needs observed on many campuses, Feminists for Life began to expand its College Outreach Program.



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## Evidence of the Need for Support: College-aged women have the highest rate of abortion

- Women with some college have a *pregnancy* rate that is lower than average, but still have the highest *abortion* rate of any educational group.
- 45% of women who have abortions are college-aged, 18-24 years old.
- Among women who had abortions, 71% of 18-19 year olds and 58% of 20-24 year olds said pregnancy would interfere with their education or career.

Feminists for Life works with people on both sides of the abortion issue as a catalyst for change to foster creative solutions for pregnant and parenting students.

## Pregnancy Resource Forums

Feminists for Life's non-confrontational Pregnancy Resource Forums are central to its College Outreach Program. The Forums bring together students, university administrators, campus health clinic staff, residential life advisors, counselors, financial aid directors and other members of the campus community to identify and evaluate resources for pregnant and parenting students and create a blueprint for progress. This approach redirects energy from polarized debate toward creative solutions like telecommuting and child care services. The Forums are the inspiration for the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Act.

## Results

Students, administrators and activists at numerous colleges and universities—from Harvard to Berkeley, from Notre Dame to the University of San Diego—have come together to challenge the status quo. Highlights of specific improvements that have resulted include:

- Within two years after the first Forum at Georgetown University in 1997, GU set aside housing, began onsite day care, employed a full time pregnancy resource services counselor and began a 7-day-a-week pregnancy hotline. Annual Forums continue to advance progress.
- Students at the University of California-Berkeley raised funds for 22 baby-changing tables on campus to assist the 1,000 parenting students who attend each year.
- Pro-life, pro-choice and parenting students at Wellesley College collaborated in a rummage sale to raise thousands of dollars to benefit pregnant and parenting students.
- University of Chicago graduate school dads proposed the creation of a child care co-op to reduce child care costs.
- University of Virginia students began to provide volunteer babysitting services.

## When was the last time Focus on the Family and Planned Parenthood staffers agreed on something?

"Kathryn McLearan, grassroots coordinator for Planned Parenthood Marmonte, said Planned Parenthood agrees resources need to be available for young women in college. 'While Planned Parenthood and Feminists for Life may not agree on every abortion issue, all groups that care about women should work at giving women resources that they need,' she said. McLearan noted that young women are often without health insurance and adequate funds for health care, so groups that are willing to provide these services are crucial to young women raising families."

*California Aggie, UC Davis, November 2005*

Linda Klepacki, analyst for sexual health for Focus on the Family Action, said providing life-affirming support for college women who are dealing with a crisis pregnancy is a great idea. "So many girls have no idea that this is an option. It would be such an awesome positive for college campuses."

*"Congress Considers Reducing Abortions on Campus," Citizen Link, November 2005*

**Americans have different views on abortion, but we can all agree that abortions should be reduced and that pregnant and parenting students deserve resources and support.**

**"Women who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy also deserve unplanned joy."**

**Patricia Heaton**

FFL Honorary Chair

Two-time Emmy Winner

*New York Times* best-selling author



refuse to choose

**Women Deserve Better than Abortion**

FEMINISTS FOR LIFE.org