

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2006

The Honorable Michael Leavitt
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt,

We write to express our strong concern over the appointment of Dr. Eric Keroack to be Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs. In this position, Dr. Keroack will be charged with overseeing Title X of the Public Health Service Act, a public health program that provides a broad range of contraceptive services, including factual information and nondirective options counseling to women in need, without regard to age, income, or marital status.

Dr. Keroack has made a career out of promoting abstinence-only education and appears to be fundamentally opposed to contraception. His public statements indicate hostility to the kind of mainstream preventive health services that are at the heart of the Title X family planning program. He serves as the medical director for five crisis pregnancy centers run by an organization which, according to its website, prohibits staff from distributing or encouraging the use of contraceptive drugs and devices.

Dr. Keroack is also a vocal supporter of abstinence-only programs to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. He serves on the Medical Advisory Council of the National Abstinence Clearinghouse and is a member of the Federal Expert Panel commissioned to define the criteria and guidelines for grantees receiving funds under the Community-Based Abstinence Education Program, which, according to GAO provides information that may be medically inaccurate, and lacks proven scientific support. Although abstinence is an important component of comprehensive sexuality education, abundant evidence suggests that it is ineffective, unrealistic and potentially harmful to advocate abstinence as the sole option.

Unfortunately, this appointment is another example of the Administration allowing ideology to trump science, and it could jeopardize vital services on which large numbers of women and families depend. Given Dr. Keroack's ideological record on Title X services, we urge you to withdraw this appointment and select a Deputy Assistant Secretary who will vigorously administer Title X as intended by Congress under current law.

With respect and appreciation,

Sincerely,

Patty Murray

Tom F. Kelly

Chris Dodd

Frank R. Lautenberg

Robert Menendez
Nom Feingold

Barbara Byer

Ed Kennedy

Patrick Leahy

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Murray

Robert A. Menendez

Tom A

Bob