

note: This bill passed the Congress in 1979.

It remains a source of federal funding for teen pregnancy programs.

CHILD WELFARE PLANNING NOTES

Published by the CWLA Hecht Institute for State Child Welfare Planning, a Division of the Child Welfare League of America, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

Volume 3, Number 14
July 20, 1978

Teenage Pregnancy

EMILY PALMER, CWLA-CRITTENTON, TESTIFIES FOR CHANGES IN SENATE BILL

PREVENTION AND SERVICES COMPETE FOR LIMITED \$60 MILLION FUNDING

SENATORS QUESTION WHETHER ANY NEW PROGRAM CAN BE ENACTED

"Children" are giving birth to children in this country. The average age of puberty is 12.8 years, and this is going down by 4 months per decade. One million (1 in 10) 15-19 year old girls plus 30,000 girls 14 years old and younger are becoming pregnant each year. For this group: pre-natal care is limited or non-existent; infant mortality is high; babies run high risks of handicapping conditions; and both the teenage parents and their babies are likely to end up on welfare.

In April, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) introduced S. 2910, the Administration's Adolescent Health, Services, and Pregnancy Prevention and Care Act of 1978. This bill proposed to "retarget" funds in a number of existing education, health and social services programs to the teen pregnancy problem and to establish a \$60 million new program of prevention and services. As written, the bill would fund comprehensive service programs with 50 percent of the \$60 million, with the other half designated for "linkages."



EMILY PALMER

During the two Senate hearings and one House hearing in June and July, service providers have been protesting the meager funding as well as the prevention and "linkages" portions of the bill. On the issue of sharing the very limited funds with prevention programs, service providers point out that Title X of the Public Health Services Act (passed by the Senate in June and awaiting House floor action) already contains a targeted \$18 million for family planning and \$22 million for population research. In the midst of this, even the most sympathetic members of Congress are expressing serious doubts that any sort of new program can be enacted this tax reform year.

Testifying on behalf of the Child Welfare League's Florence Crittenton Division, Emily Palmer, Executive Director of the Lula Belle Stewart Center in Detroit, made a strong and explicit case, clearly representing the long years of experience Crittenton agencies have in serving adolescent parents. While other witnesses conceptualized possible solutions, Palmer spoke with assurance and authority about what kinds of services actually help teenagers and why these are necessary to conserve the nation's human and fiscal resources.