**Planned Parenthood Denounces New Teen Pregnancy Ad Campaign**

**Ads Placed In Bus, Subway Stops Across New York City Draw Swift Response**

March 7, 2013 5:44 PM

**NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) –** Planned Parenthood of New York City has denounced a new bus and subway campaign that targets teenage pregnancy saying the ads show “stigmatizing, fear-based messages.”

The posters were unveiled this week by the New York City Human Resources Administration.

They show images of toddlers and what the HRA calls the ”hard-hitting facts about the money and time costs of parenting, and the negative consequences of having a child before you are ready,” according to the city’s website.

One poster shows a crying toddler and text that reads: “I’m twice as likely not to graduate high school because you had me as a teen.”

Another shows a little girl with text that says: “Honestly Mom…chances are he won’t stay with you. What happens to me?”



A bus ad from HRA’s Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign. (credit: NYC Human Resources Administration/Flickr)

Planned Parenthood said the campaign ignores the racial, economic and social factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy.

Haydee Morales, Vice President of Education and Training at Planned Parenthood, said the ads create “stigma, hostility and negative public opinions about teen pregnancy and parenthood rather than offering alternative aspirations for young people.”

“The city’s money would be better spent helping teens access health care, birth control and high-quality sexual and reproductive health education, not on an ad campaign intended to create shock value,” she said in a statement on organization’s website.

Brooklyn Young Mothers Collective executive director Yeashea Braddock told CBS 2′s Emily Smith the city should’ve consulted with groups that work with youth and teen parents to find a more educational approach.

“Because you would know guilt or shame or scare tactics are the least likely things to make adolescents listen to you. They tend to want to do the opposite. It’s the immortality complex — that wont be me,” Braddock said.

Also part of the campaign is a strategy advising girls to text “notnow’ to the number 877 877 to receive a message that will include information about weight gain or a boyfriend ignoring you.

“The spin of it should be more empowerment or education or you’re in control of your life. Mom, you had me and we are in control of our life,” Braddock told CBS 2′s Smith.

However, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said the campaign “makes very clear to young people that there’s a lot at stake when it comes to deciding to raise a child.”

“We’ve already seen important progress in our effort to help more teens delay pregnancy – teen pregnancy has steadily declined in New York City – but there is more work still to be done,” he said in a statement about the campaign. “We aim to build on our success by asking teens to take an honest look at some of the realities of parenthood they may not have considered.”

But a city elected official has come out fully in support of the city’s new ads, calling them an accurate depiction.

“My mother was a teenage mother. While I am very blessed and consider myself lucky to be successful in life, I realize that I am the exception to the rule,” Queens City Councilman Eric Ulrich told WCBS 880′s Alex Silverman.

Ulrich called the new ads “brilliant.”

“The ad campaign is not offensive,” Ulrich added.

Planned Parenthood declined interviews Thursday afternoon in what could be a sign that the group is backing away from its criticism, Silverman reported.

New Yorkers had mixed reactions to the posters.

“Maybe if I were a child and had a teenage mom, those ads might not make me feel that great about myself,” one woman told 1010 WINS’ Stan Brooks.

“That seems a little strong, particularly with the image of the child,” one man said. “It’s a little manipulative.”

New York City has reduced teen pregnancy by 27 percent in the past decade, according to the Department of Health. But Planned Parenthood said campaigns like this are not what led to that success.

“Teenage parenthood is simply not the disastrous and life-compromising event these ads portray. It’s time we focus on the root causes rather than point fingers at teen parents and their children,” Morales said.

Responding to the criticism, the mayor’s office said it was important to “send a strong message that teen pregnancy has consequences” and that they are extremely life-altering.

The mayor’s office said research shows that children born to young, unmarried parents are more likely to be poor, have emotional and behavioral problems and are less likely to do well in school.

According to the Department of Health, more than 20,000 teens in New York get pregnant each year. It says 87 percent of those are unplanned and with unwed partners.

In addition to the ads, the campaign also features an interactive texting program with facts, games and quizzes. The HRA says it will also post a YouTube video later this month that shows “a baby ‘confronting’ young teens on the cost of taking care of a child.”