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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT CARRIÓN AND CITY COUNCIL MAJORITY LEADER RIVERA JOIN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION - WHEDCo- IN CALLING ON CITY TO PROVIDE SEX ED CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

***MAJORITY LEADER RIVERA TO HOLD COUNCIL HEARINGS; WHEDCo SAYS LINK BETWEEN TEEN PREGNANCY, SCHOOL DROP-OUT AND CHRONIC POVERTY EXISTS IN NYC***

**Bronx, NY – (July 10, 2006)** – Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr. and City Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera (D-Bronx) today joined the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCo), a nonprofit Bronx-based organization dedicated to the economic advancement of low-income women and families, to call on the New York City Department of Education to work with them in addressing the ongoing educational and health crises in city schools by adopting a uniform, age-appropriate sex education curriculum for students beginning in sixth grade.

Borough President Carrion has been in contact with Department of Education officials and they agree that these serious crises must be addressed immediately. Majority Leader Rivera, as Chair of the City Council Health Committee, also committed to a public hearing in the fall to address the issue of teen pregnancy and how to combat it in the public schools.

According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey by the Department of Health, about 5,700 live births in 2004 in New York City were to teen mothers. Almost 50% of the city's public school students have had sex; 35% were 14 years old or younger. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy notes that students who drop out are more likely to be male, but females who drop out (40%) often do so because of reasons associated with pregnancy. Traumatic life events and the presence of stressors such as financial difficulties, health problems and early parenthood, are associated with increased drop-out rates.

“There are still alarmingly high rates of teen pregnancy and parenting in this city,” said Nancy Biberman, WHEDCo's Founder and President. “Girls from WHEDCo's after school program at MS 218 report that for the most part, their sex education comes from music videos and television. We know that far too many teen mothers never receive their high school diploma or equivalency, making it virtually impossible to escape poverty.”

In the city, an estimated 20,000 mothers under age 21 have not completed high school. Forty-one percent are under age 18 and required by law to be in school. High school drop-out rates in New York City remain stubbornly high – nearly 50% city-wide and as high as 69% in some districts.

*(more)*

“Clearly, teenage pregnancy is a problem throughout New York City,” said Borough President Carrion. “It is vitally important for the city to develop an age appropriate curriculum for both young men and women. Through proper education, counseling and adult involvement, we can combat this problem. Young people must be encouraged to make responsible choices to stay in school, pursue a career and delay having children until they can emotionally and financially support a family. I look forward to working with the Departments of Health, Education and community groups, to develop a proper curriculum that addresses this growing problem.”

“Jeopardizing the lives and health of city children is not acceptable,” said Council Majority Leader Rivera. “There is no question that accurate and age-appropriate sex education prevents unintended pregnancies – and teens are far more likely to drop out of school as a result of having babies. The Council’s Health Committee will hold hearings on this subject at the earliest possible time to determine how, as a city, we can work together to reduce the number of children having children.”

Currently the city’s school health curriculum does not include sex education. While New York State requires that public schools offer HIV/AIDS prevention, it does not mandate a set of courses on sexuality, relationships or birth control. Borough President Carrion, Council Member Rivera and Ms. Biberman believe that a mandated sex education component will help prevent teenagers from becoming parents too soon and dropping out of school.

“We need preventive measures now to curb this trend,” said Ms. Biberman. “Teens need information and straight talk about sex, relationships and peer pressure. Test scores are just not enough when it comes to grading the health and welfare of our children.”

#### **About WHEDCo**

WHEDCo is a nonprofit Bronx-based organization dedicated to the economic advancement of low-income women and families through the creation of beautiful physical environments and uniquely integrated social services that address the interlocking social, emotional and systemic problems associated with poverty. Founded in 1991, together with a grassroots coalition of community women and a local school’s Parents’ Association, WHEDCO rescued the abandoned Morrisania Hospital, assembling \$23 million in financing to restore the building to its former glory, and spearheading a successful effort to build a new bilingual public school. The award-winning Urban Horizons Economic Development Center opened to national attention in 1997; the building includes 132 units of affordable housing, along with a community economic development center which offers Head Start, social services, family day care microenterprise, youth after school programs, a commercial kitchen business incubator, health care and adult job training. WHEDCo’s latest housing development, 177 affordable apartments, built entirely green and wired for broadband internet, broke ground in April 2006.

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(see graphs)

### Nearly half of NYC teenagers are sexually active

Teens who have:	Number	Percent
Ever had sex	118,000	48%
Had 4 or more sex partners	44,000	18%
Used condom at last sex	49,000	69%
Ever pregnant/made pregnant	17,000	6.3%

### They are engaging in sex at young ages, often before they reach high school

Teens who have had sex at age:	Number	Percent
14 years or younger	15,900	35%
15 years old	32,700	43%
16 years old	30,000	50%
17 years old	24,800	56%
18 years old	14,400	68%

### More teens are engaging in risky behavior than two years ago

	2003	2005
<b>Percentage of teens who:</b>		
Had 4 or more sex partners	17.1%	17.7%
Used condom at last sex	76.4%	69.2%
Ever pregnant/made pregnant	5.1%	6.3%

### Thousands of teens have sex against their will

	Number	Percent
<b>Forced to have sex (ever)</b>	3,900	8.3%
14 years or younger	3,100	6.30%
15 years old	6,400	7.40%
16 years old	6,000	8.60%
17 years old	2,800	5.50%
18 years old	2,700	11%

Source: 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene