



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **100 High School Students Stand Up for Comprehensive Sex Education with State Legislators**

Harrisburg, PA – On June 15, 2016, 100 high school students from Southwest Pennsylvania will hold a press conference in the State Capitol to advocate for comprehensive sex education. They will be joined by supportive state legislators, including Sen. Judith Schwank and Sen. Rob Teplitz. The event is part of the Women and Girls Foundation's annual GirlGov Program.

**DATE: Wednesday, June 15, 2016**

**TIME: 3:30 – 4:00 PM**

**LOCATION: State Capitol Building Rotunda**

GirlGov ([www.girlgov.org](http://www.girlgov.org)), a program created in 2009 by the Women and Girls Foundation (WGF), this year includes 100 participating teenage women who represent 43 schools and four counties in Southwest PA. GirlGov provides participants the opportunity to shadow state legislators; learn more about civics, advocacy, leadership, and women's history; and work on campaigns of their own initiative. On June 15, the 100 GirlGov participants will spend the day shadowing their state legislators. In addition, this year's GirlGov cohort has chosen to use part of their day at the Capitol to advocate for legislation to be passed at the state level mandating science-based comprehensive sex education curricula for all Pennsylvania schools.

“As a high school student, I know firsthand that current sex education curriculums are subpar,” said 11<sup>th</sup> grade GirlGov participant Serena Zets. “I’m really excited to be a part of this campaign! Hopefully it will give students comprehensive sexual health education, as well as a chance to have a voice in the political process.”

“Last year our program grew from a four day trip to Harrisburg to a yearlong program. Over the year our girls met monthly to learn how to organize and campaign,” said WGF Program Manager Blayre Holmes. “Together they decided a campaign for comprehensive sex education policy reform is needed in order for teens throughout Pennsylvania to make well-informed and healthy decisions when it comes to their lives now and in the future.”

Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner introduced House Bill 1163, also known as the Healthy Youth Act, when she was a state representative in 2010. The bill proposed establishing

minimum standards for sex education curricula administered in public schools. GirlGov participants and supportive legislators hope that the House Education Committee will reintroduce and approve the Healthy Youth Act this year. During the 2016-2017 program year, GirlGov participants will continue to campaign for sex education reform at the state legislature and in their own school districts.

“Back in 2005, the Women and Girls Foundation supported our teen advocates’ successful campaign to Gircott Abercrombie & Fitch for selling sexist t-shirts at their stores,” said Women and Girls Foundation CEO Heather Arnet. “Since that time, we have supported advocacy efforts, led by teen women in our GirlGov program, which have helped pass new environmental policies within school districts and state laws to protect teen victims of stalking and dating violence. We are proud to be supporting this year’s GirlGov class in their efforts to pass legislation to improve the health and wellbeing of young people throughout the commonwealth.”

### **About the Women and Girls Foundation**

The Women and Girls Foundation is a non-profit community based organization in Southwest Pennsylvania. The mission of the Women and Girls Foundation ([www.wgfp.org](http://www.wgfp.org)) is to achieve equality for women and girls, now and for generations to come. GirlGov is one of the main initiatives of WGF and involves 100 girls from diverse backgrounds each year. For additional information about GirlGov or the rally on June 15, or to request an interview with a WGF GirlGov spokesperson, please contact Miciah Foster at [Miciah@wgfp.org](mailto:Miciah@wgfp.org) or via cell phone at 412-706-1692.

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