

Washington, DC - Congressman Charles Gonzalez (TX-20) today applauded the launch of a new initiative by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy focused on reducing adolescent pregnancy among Latinos.

"As the National Campaign emphasizes, teen pregnancy is linked to many other critical social issues that affect our community, such as poverty, education, and child welfare," said Rep. Gonzalez, an honorary host of the event.

At present, one in two Latina teens gets pregnant at least once before the age of 20. In addition, the Latino teen pregnancy rate is almost twice the national average and has declined half as fast as the national rate. A total of 18 states have reported increases in the Latino teen birth rate between 1991 and 2003.

To address this serious challenge, the National Campaign has made a commitment to developing a large-scale, strategic, and science-based initiative to mobilize and support Latino communities in preventing teen pregnancy.

The Latina teen birth rate declined only 5% in Texas between 1990 and 2003 compared to the nationwide decline of 15%. According to research from the National Campaign, teen childbearing in Texas cost taxpayers \$1 billion in 2004 alone.

"In my state of Texas we have a lot of work to do: teen pregnancy is going down slower than in almost any other state in the country and we have the highest teen birth rate of any state," Rep. Gonzalez said. "The billion dollars that teen childbearing cost could have been wisely spent to improve schools, provide additional access to health care, and increase crime prevention efforts."

"I commend this new initiative by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and I look forward to working together to address this critical issue in our community," he added.

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