



**Brad Henry**  
Governor

November 5, 2007

Thomas Kean, Chair  
Board of Directors  
National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy  
1776 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Chairman Kean:

This is Oklahoma's Centennial year, providing our state and its wonderful people with a special opportunity to reflect upon our past, celebrate our accomplishments, and set goals that will ensure a brighter future for our state. Those goals include improving the health and well-being of our greatest resource, our young people.

For far too many young people in our state, their health, safety, educational achievement, economic opportunities and family stability are diminished before they reach adulthood. Oklahoma's teen birth rate is one of the leading reasons. Teen pregnancy and too-early childbearing have a direct connection to high rates of child poverty, child abuse and neglect, school dropouts, incarceration and other negative health, education and economic costs and consequences.

In 2004, Oklahoma's teen birth rate for females aged 15-19 was 56 per 1,000 while the national average was 41 births per 1,000 females, aged 15-19. We were among the top seven states with the highest (worst) teen birth rates. In central city and rural areas with high poverty rates, teen birth rates can rise to three times the national average.

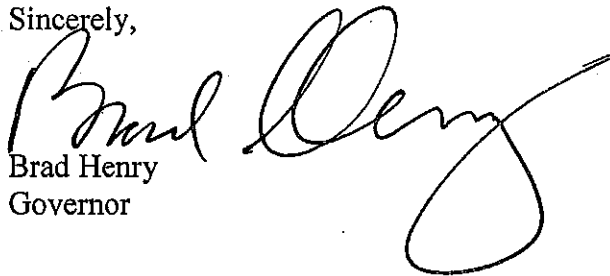
According to the report by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, the cost of teen births to Oklahoma taxpayers was \$149 million in 2004. Between 1991-2004, there were over 108,000 births to teens in our state, with an estimated cost to the taxpayers of \$2.5 billion.

Teen pregnancy prevention offers a tremendous return on investment and is sound fiscal policy. Preventing teen pregnancy is one of the most practical means of reducing poverty while also aiding workforce development efforts.

I applaud the Interagency Council for adopting the goal of reducing teen pregnancy in Oklahoma by one third over the next decade. By focusing on strategies and

programs that are proven to work, I know we can achieve this goal in our state. Doing so will ensure a brighter future for Oklahoma and for our young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Henry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Brad Henry  
Governor