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## **NASBHC Responds to School-Based Health Centers Providing Contraception**

*Washington, DC, October 26, 2007* – On Wednesday October 17, the Portland, Maine School Committee voted on a proposal for students with parental permission to be treated at King Middle School's health center to be able to receive birth control prescriptions. The Portland Division of Public Health submitted the proposal to the School Committee in response to rising numbers of pregnancies and sexual activity in middle school students. This decision prompted vast national media attention creating an opportunity to highlight a critical health care delivery model - school-based health centers (SBHCs).

SBHCs are a partnership among pediatric health care providers, parents, and schools to ensure the well-being, safety, and success of children and adolescents. Parents decide whether their children will enroll to receive the services of the SBHC. Furthermore, in the majority of SBHCs, parents have the opportunity to restrict their child's access to specific services offered at the SBHC.

The National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (NASBHC) believes, as the national organization representing SBHCs, one of the greatest strengths of the SBHC model is that services provided in a SBHC are a direct response to the needs of the individual community and are determined as such. The community decides what services will be offered, based on health and safety needs of children in accordance with community values.

Of the estimated 1350 SBHCs nationwide that serve at least one grade of adolescents, 70% are prohibited from distributing contraception. The remaining 30% of SBHCs may dispense condoms, provide referrals to students, write prescriptions, and in few cases, dispense contraception on site. While NASBHC cannot provide a specific number, it is rare that SBHCs in middle schools dispense contraception. The two most common reproductive health care services provided in a SBHC are pregnancy testing and abstinence counseling.

Reproductive health care services are a small subset of the wide scope of services offered by the majority of SBHCs. Common primary care services provided by SBHCs include comprehensive health assessments, asthma treatment, sports physicals, treatment of acute illness, mental health counseling and treatment, dental care, and nutrition counseling.

According to a recent study conducted by Lake Research Partners, voters overwhelmingly support school-based health centers as a way for children and adolescents to get the health care they need to prevent illness, detect problems early, and succeed in school. These voters cross age, ethnic, gender, and political affiliation lines.