

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, May 6, 2010

Contact: Beth Kanter
312.592.6829 (office)
773.551.7044 (cell)

**On 50th Anniversary of the Pill, Eight out of 10 Women Say Birth Control
Should Be Covered by Insurers**

*Planned Parenthood of Illinois Says Too Many Women Do Not Have Access to Affordable Contraception
Including the Pill and Urges Action More Work to Do*

With the 50th anniversary of the approval of the pill in the United States being marked this weekend, Planned Parenthood of Illinois released a national survey that found eight out of 10 women believe that insurance companies should be required to cover birth control pills and other forms of contraception at low or no cost, just as they must for other medications used for prevention under the new health care reform law. The poll commissioned by Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) was released today, May 6, almost 50 years to the day after a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Advisory Committee voted to approve the use of the first birth control pill on May 9, 1960. The pill was formally approved as an oral contraceptive by the FDA on June 23, 1960.

Since the FDA's approval of the pill, the number of women who die each year as a result of pregnancy has dropped by half. During that same period, there has been a threefold decline in infant deaths. The number of unplanned pregnancies has also declined. And as access to contraception has increased, the rate of abortion has decreased.

"I've seen firsthand the truly uplifting effect that access to birth control has had for women and families here in Illinois," said Carole Brite, Interim CEO, Planned Parenthood of Illinois. "Fifty years ago, before the pill was approved, it was unimaginable in Illinois that a woman would be able to decide how many children she wanted and when to have them. We now take this for granted, but before 1960 women in this part of the country had very options when it came to family planning."

The survey commissioned by Planned Parenthood Federation of America also found that:

- Eight out of 10 women (79 percent) consider the birth control pill preventive health care, just like other preventive measures like taking medication for blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as vaccines. Seven out of 10 *men* (68 percent) agreed that the birth control pill is preventive health care.
- Three out of four women (76 percent) said that the birth control pill is one of the most important medical advances of the last century and has had a positive impact on women's day-to-day lives.
- Three out of four people (74 percent) favor requiring insurance to cover the birth control pill and other forms of contraception at low or no cost, like they do for other preventive health care measures and medications.

"The availability of the pill has literally reshaped the lives of women, men and families across the country and around the globe," said Cecile Richards, president of PPFA. "This highly effective oral contraceptive enables women to plan their own futures in ways they never could before by deciding the timing and spacing of their children, as well as by being able to decide to pursue more education and employment before they start their families. This is one pill that literally changed the world and the way we live."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will write regulations that will determine whether contraceptives, including the pill, are included as a preventive health measure under the Women's Health Amendment, sponsored by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), and included in the recently passed health care reform legislation. Under the amendment, preventive medications and measures must be covered by insurers at no or low cost.

Planned Parenthood has long advocated for access to birth control. Its founder, Margaret Sanger, opened the nation's first birth control clinic in 1916 and drove the research and development of the pill in the 1950s. After the FDA approved the pill, it was still not legal in all states, and Planned Parenthood won the case before the United States Supreme Court in 1965 that made contraception legal for married couples. In recent years, Planned Parenthood has led the effort to ensure that private insurers cover the pill and other forms of contraception, and is currently working to ensure that contraception is covered under the preventive health provisions of the new health care reform law.

Planned Parenthood of Illinois provides care, including men's health services, gynecological exams, clinical breast exams, comprehensive birth control services, emergency contraception, pregnancy testing and options counseling, STD testing and treatment, HIV testing and counseling, HPV vaccine, Hepatitis A & B vaccine, and abortion services to over 60,000

women, men, and teens each year, and has been doing so since 1947. Nationwide, one in four American women has sought health care from Planned Parenthood at least once in her life, and today's poll shows that two-thirds of women (66 percent) trust Planned Parenthood as a provider of birth control pills and other forms of contraception. Planned Parenthood sees three million patients each year in its more than 840 health centers, and provides information to millions of people through www.plannedparenthood.org, which includes a widget — "My Method" — to help women select the best forms of contraception for them.

The poll released today was designed by Lake Research Partners and administered by Caravan in an omnibus survey conducted by telephone, using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,009 adults 18 years of age and older, nationwide in the continental United States. It was conducted April 29–May 2, 2010. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent.

###

Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL) provides affordably priced high-quality reproductive health care services to women and families throughout Illinois. Through health care services, educational programs and advocacy efforts, PPIL works to ensure and protect the reproductive rights of each individual. For more information, visit www.ppil.org.