



The Public Affairs Pulse

Keeping You on Top of Legislative & Advocacy Issues

Birth Control Victory!

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On January 20, the Obama Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that they would protect access to affordable birth control for millions of women and not further expand the religious refusal provision to the birth control coverage benefit under the Affordable Care Act.

This decision is grounded in sound medical science and health policy and ensures millions of women will have access to affordable birth control, including women who are employed by a religiously affiliated hospital, university, or other religiously affiliated organization that serves the broader public.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended birth control be covered as a women's preventive service because it is fundamental to improving women's health and the health of their families. Increased access to birth control is directly linked to declines in maternal and infant mortality, as well as other health benefits and positive health outcomes.

Unfortunately, over the past several months, conservative House members and Catholic bishops have lobbied the Obama administration for an enormous and harmful expansion of the refusal clause in the new Affordable Care Act that would undermine millions of women's access to affordable birth control. Fortunately, the Obama Administration rejected this effort.

Birth control is not just basic health care for women, it is an economic issue. Without this new birth control coverage benefit, many women would pay \$15 to \$50 a month. This benefit will help millions of women save hundreds of dollars each year.

Planned Parenthood is proud to have played a significant role in this fight by engaging thousands of supporters who emailed their representatives, HHS, and the Obama administration, placed phone calls to the key decision-makers and spread the word through social media outlets.

Looking Forward – A Summary of Upcoming State Legislation

LANSING — The Michigan legislature reconvened in early January after the holiday break. Legislators have begun setting the legislative agenda for 2012 and, based on current and proposed legislation thus far, the reproductive justice community will face many battles this year.

Much of the legislation echoes attempts at federal legislation in 2011. This includes an insurance ban designed to stop insurance providers from covering abortion services, as well as an exclusion of abortion providers in the new health insurance exchanges, and a state-level defunding bill.

In addition, a "pro-life" license plate proposal has been introduced in the Senate. Thirty-eight states have already passed this proposal and produce these license plates. The money raised from their sale would go to the crisis pregnancy centers around the state.

More upcoming MI legislation:

- Requirement for physicians that provide abortions to carry \$1M liability coverage
- Abortion restriction after 19 weeks
- Revised ultrasound requirement
- Fetal Remains Disposal
- Telemedicine
- Coercion Screening for Abortions

Planned Parenthood will continue to monitor and fight against the laws that further restrict women's access to necessary reproductive health care.

Anniversary of Roe v Wade

January 22 marked the anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court Decision upholding women's right to privacy and making abortion legal in the U.S.

In celebration, JET (Justice Engagement Team), PPWNM's adult advocacy program, hosted a "Talking About Choice" event on Tuesday, January 24. The event included information about the history of abortion, anti-choice laws and tactics, as well as a role play called "A Few Choice Words" designed to encourage thoughtful responses to anti-choice sentiments.

The event was opened by Kathy Humphrey, PPWNM president and CEO, telling those in attendance about changes in the reproductive justice movement during her tenure. Pizza and refreshments were served during the presentation and each guest was given a "Talking About Choice" toolkit to take home.