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# The Public Affairs Pulse

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Keeping You on Top of Legislative & Advocacy Issues

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## **HHS Rejects FDA Recommendation to Lift Restrictions on Plan B**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Planned Parenthood is extremely disappointed in the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) decision not to lift the availability restriction for over-the-counter access to emergency contraception (EC), also known as Plan B. Lifting the availability restriction would have made Plan B more accessible to women of all ages.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was in favor of lifting the availability restriction, following a thorough review of scientific findings that prove EC is a safe and effective way to prevent unintended pregnancy when regular contraception has failed or unprotected sex has occurred; as well as additional studies showing that adolescents with childbearing potential, without the intervention of a healthcare provider, can determine when Plan B should be used and how it should be taken. Studies also show that teens are as likely as adults to use EC correctly and that the rates of unprotected sex do not increase when they have easier access to EC. Unfortunately, HHS did not take the FDA's recommendation.

Currently, EC must be kept behind pharmacy counters. Lifting the availability restriction and allowing Plan B onto store shelves would remove barriers that women face in purchasing Plan B. For instance, women of all ages would not be limited to purchasing EC from pharmacies, which typically have limited hours.

Nearly half of all pregnancies that occur in the U.S. each year are unintended. Planned Parenthood is

committed to reducing this number, particularly among teens. By allowing women under 17 over-the-counter access to EC, we could help reduce teen pregnancy and abortion rates. Unfortunately, this decision makes reducing these rates even harder.

Until the availability restriction is lifted and access made more available, women of all ages will still encounter significant barriers in accessing the full range of contraceptive options available to them.

## **MI Legislature Introduces Insurance Coverage Ban for Abortion**

LANSING — SB 612 and 613 will prohibit insurers operating in Michigan from offering – and citizens of Michigan from using their own private dollars to purchase – insurance coverage for abortion care. While the legislation suggests that such coverage could be obtained through a supplemental, single-service rider, the result will undoubtedly be the loss of comprehensive insurance coverage for the women of Michigan.

In the current private health insurance marketplace, most health plans provide coverage for abortion services as part of a broader health care package. However, there is nothing in Michigan law that requires any employer or individual to purchase insurance coverage that includes abortion care. The decision of what coverage to select is left up to the purchaser. With the majority of private insurance plans covering abortion today, this bill would constitute an unprecedented restriction on women.

This legislation is particularly harmful to the most vulnerable women.

The bills have no exception for the ongoing health of a woman, rape, or incest. The bills only allow insurance coverage for abortions if a woman's life is at risk. This excludes many circumstances where a woman's health could be at risk if she continues a pregnancy. The legislation also does not allow insurance coverage if a woman needs an abortion due to a fetal anomaly.

Singling out abortion care – a service that only women need – is discriminatory toward women. Women in difficult circumstances would be forced to pay for the care they need out-of-pocket – which could cost thousands of dollars – despite the fact that they already pay for health insurance.

For these reasons, we urge you to contact your legislator and tell them to vote "NO" on SB 612 and 613.

## **Upcoming Events**

**MLK Day Donation Drive:** During the month of January, PPWNM Health Centers will be collecting feminine hygiene products to donate to local domestic violence prevention organizations. Drop boxes will be located in all eight health centers.

**"Talking About Choice" Roe v Wade Anniversary Event:** On Jan. 24, PPWNM's JET group will host a workshop to recognize Roe v Wade. Join us to learn more about the choice debate, how to talk about your pro-choice views and how to find resources in Kent County.

For more information about these events, please e-mail: [publicaffairs@ppwnm.org](mailto:publicaffairs@ppwnm.org).