

RHTP Statement on Legislation to Make Birth Control Pill Available without a Prescription

Expansion in Access Should Not Come at the Price of Affordability

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Washington, DC – Last Thursday, Senators Cory Gardner (R-CO) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) introduced the [Allowing Greater Access to Safe and Effective Contraception Act](#). While the bill would direct the Food and Drug Administration to expedite review of an application for over-the-counter (OTC) status for oral contraception and waive fees for the process, the fact that the bill includes no protections for insurance coverage and would impose an age limit reveals a disingenuous agenda to increase, rather than decrease, obstacles to contraception.

“This bill would rob Peter to pay Paul by shifting the cost of birth control from health plans back to the consumer,” said Jessica Arons, President & CEO of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project.

“Although it would in theory increase access to one method of contraception – the birth control pill – by incentivizing the process for making it available without a prescription, it would do so by abandoning protections in the law that require insurers to cover contraception with no cost-sharing, such as co-pays. RHTP wholeheartedly supports moving birth control OTC, but not by making women pay twice – first with their premiums and again at the drugstore counter.

“Moreover, this bill would create an unnecessary age restriction, which would only cause confusion and undermine access. We’ve seen this story before with emergency contraception (EC) and it doesn’t end well. Although initial barriers to EC like age limits have since been removed, we’re still dealing with the effects today of bad policies and missteps on the path to OTC status.

“Let’s learn from our history. Access to birth control is too important to fall prey to political games.”

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Founded in 1982, the mission of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project is to advance the ability of every woman of any age to achieve full reproductive freedom with access to the safest, most effective, appropriate and acceptable technologies for ensuring her own health and controlling her fertility. To fulfill this mission, we seek to build consensus in support of an education, research and advocacy agenda for reproductive health and reproductive freedom. We seek consensus through a process of dialogue among diverse communities about technological developments and their global implications.