

February 15, 2012

Dear Members of the House Committee on Government Operations,

Planned Parenthood strongly opposes HR 185 and urges the committee to put women's health first. Instead of focusing on divisive issues, the health and well-being of women in Michigan and across the country should be our primary concern.

At Planned Parenthood, we see everyday how important contraception access is to women. Birth control is both a fundamental health care issue and a serious economic concern. As health care providers, our highest concern is the health of our patients and that is why we applaud the Obama administration for recognizing the importance of contraception and making sure that all women will have access to this important preventative health care.

The new benefit does not require that anyone dispense or use birth control. It is simply a benefit that ensures women have adequate health insurance coverage that includes affordable birth control. That means more women can plan their families; more women can have healthy pregnancies; and more women can have healthy children.

One in three American women struggle with birth control costs at some point in their lives and have consequently used protection inconsistently. Without access to adequate health care coverage including birth control, women who cannot afford to pay hundreds of dollars a year, will turn to less reliable methods or no birth control at all. Right now over half of pregnancies in Michigan are unintended. This legislation moves Michigan in the wrong direction. We need give women and families the resources they need to plan their children.

Birth control is good preventive health care. The Institute of Medicine recommended that birth control be included as a preventive health care benefit, because it is fundamental to improving women's health and the health of their families. It saves lives, helps prevent unintended pregnancies, and improves the outcomes for children.

Virtually all women – 99% — use birth control at some point in their lives. The typical woman spends five years pregnant, or trying to get pregnant, and 30 years trying not to get pregnant. Having access to this important preventative health care is a common sense issue for real women.

This is simply a commonsense policy increasing access to affordable birth control, no matter where a person works. The bottom line is that everyone should be able to benefit from the new health care law — no matter where they work or their religious beliefs. Recent polls released show that a majority of voters, including Catholic voters, support this benefit. These same polls show strong opposition to discriminating against women by taking away their health care coverage.

If we've learned anything in the last couple of weeks, it's that people don't want politics getting in the way of health care. That's why there is broad support for this benefit.

As a trusted health care provider to one in five women, Planned Parenthood's priority is to increase access to preventive health care. The birth control coverage benefit does just that. Instead of denying access to basic health care, we urge you to join us and support policies that increase access to health care and improve the lives of women and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Scranton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Scranton  
Executive Director  
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan