



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

CHOICES CAMPUS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

WORLD'S LARGEST PRO-CHOICE STUDENT NETWORK

PROTECT THE CONTRACEPTIVE COVERAGE BENEFIT IN THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT!

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As part of the effort to increase access to preventive healthcare services, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires, with limited exceptions, all new health insurance plans to cover FDA-approved contraceptives without cost sharing. That means millions of women are receiving a wide-range of contraceptives – including birth control pills, IUDs, and emergency contraception – without having to pay copays, coinsurance, or deductibles.



Tell the SCOTUS:
#MyBodyMyBC

But now, some for-profit companies are trying to use religion to get out of providing this vital health care benefit to their female employees. On March 25, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear a challenge from two such companies: Hobby Lobby Stores and Conestoga Wood. The Court will then rule on whether women should make decisions about their birth control or whether their bosses should decide.

ACA AND BIRTH CONTROL

For the first time in history, private insurance companies can no longer discriminate against women by forcing them to pay more for preventive healthcare benefits than men. Recognizing that birth control is a basic healthcare need for women, the Affordable Care Act requires that insurance companies cover the cost of contraception like all other preventive care – without requiring the payment of copays, coinsurance or deductibles.

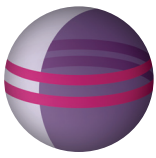
The contraceptive coverage benefit allows women to meet their healthcare needs and access the birth control that is most appropriate for them, without fear of prohibitively high upfront costs. That means women and children are healthier. It also means that more women can have the opportunity to determine if and when to become pregnant, a basic right that is directly linked to greater economic, social, and educational opportunities.

CHALLENGES TO THE CONTRACEPTIVE COVERAGE BENEFIT

Two for-profit companies, however, are trying to take this benefit away from their female employees. Hobby Lobby, a national craft store chain, and Conestoga Wood, a wood cabinet manufacturer argue that they should not be required to provide health insurance plans that cover certain types of birth control because it would violate the companies' religious beliefs. Over 40 similar cases have been filed in lower courts across the nation.

If the Supreme Court rules in favor of these for-profit companies, it would allow corporations to take away a critically important benefit that millions of American women are currently enjoying. Bosses do not get to decide what medicines their employees take or medical procedures they should undergo. These are decisions that must be made by women, their families, and their doctors.

There is no law that allows for-profit companies to use religion as cover to discriminate against women. These cases are not about protecting an individual's religious freedom. Instead, they are about whether for-profit companies will be able to dictate the personal choice of whether a woman can obtain birth control or not. The Constitution does not allow employers to impose their religious views on their employees.



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BIRTH CONTROL IS BASIC HEALTHCARE FOR WOMEN

As many as 99% of American women ages 15-44 who has ever had sexual intercourse with a man has used birth control, and as many as 88% of these women have used birth control pills, IUDs, injectables, or contraceptive patches or rings at some point in their lives. Using contraceptives is a common, broadly accepted healthcare practice. According to the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), controlling the timing and spacing of birth allows women to have healthier pregnancies and reduces the risk of birth defects, low birth weight, and preterm birth.

Many women also use contraceptives to treat a variety of health conditions, including endometriosis, ovarian cysts, severe menstrual pain, and migraines. At least 14% of American women use birth control pills exclusively for non-contraceptive purposes, and 58% of women use the pill, at least in part, for purposes other than pregnancy prevention. Studies have also shown that contraceptive use lowers the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancers.

ELIMINATING COST BARRIERS FOR CONTRACEPTION ADVANCES WOMEN'S EQUALITY

By including contraceptive coverage in the preventive care package, the ACA eliminates cost as a barrier to obtaining highly effective contraceptives. The cost of birth control forces some women to experience gaps in use, to skip pills, or to choose lower-cost, and sometimes less-effective, methods over other highly effective contraceptive methods with higher upfront costs, like IUDs..

The contraceptive coverage benefit also corrects previous sex-discrimination in the provision of healthcare benefits. Prior to the ACA, women were forced to pay more for preventive healthcare services than men, primarily because of the out-of-pocket costs associated with contraceptives. Now, women can enjoy a full-range of preventive care services appropriate for them, just like men. Taking away this benefit would mean failing to provide comprehensive preventive healthcare services specifically for women and women alone.

TAKE ACTION

Here are three easy ways you can act to protect the ACA contraceptive coverage benefit:

1. **Sign our petition to the U.S. Supreme Court.** Send a clear message to the Court that companies should not be able to use religion as cover to discriminate against women. You can find it online at: bit.ly/mybodymybc. When you sign, tell stories for the court about why birth control access is important to you!
2. **Share our petition online.** Tweet it or share it on other networks using the tag #MyBodyMyBC!
3. **Come to the U.S. Supreme Court on March 25.** Join others to show support for women's reproductive health and rights.