

December 7, 2012

Secretary Kathleen Sebelius
Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Ave., SW
Room 120F
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

We, the undersigned organizations, represent hundreds of thousands of health care professionals who care for women and teens every day. Our organizations request that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) revisit the decision regarding over-the-counter access for Plan B One-Step emergency contraception (EC). We respectfully ask that the age restrictions on this safe and effective drug be removed, enabling women of all ages to access Plan B One-Step. Extensive scientific research and medical expertise continue to support the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decision to lift the age restriction in order to make Plan B more accessible to all women.

As voluminous research shows, Plan B safely helps teen and adult women prevent unintended pregnancies. All women should have emergency contraception (EC) as a back-up birth control option in cases of unprotected sex, sexual assault, or contraceptive failure. Allowing everyone—teens and adults—to buy Plan B over-the-counter would also result in fewer unintended pregnancies. Last year's decision by HHS not only prevents teens from accessing a safe and effective medication, but also prevents women of all ages from easily accessing emergency contraception. Moreover, keeping it behind the counter has created situations in which pharmacists give out incorrect information to doctors and patients about the medication's availability and accompanying age restrictions.¹

Medical authorities, including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, agree that Plan B One-Step is safe for over-the-counter use by anyone at risk of an unintended pregnancy. Requiring a prescription serves as an unnecessary barrier, especially when timely access is critical for optimal effectiveness of Plan B. Studies have shown teen and adult women can read and follow instructions for safe and proper use of emergency contraception. Plan B is extremely safe for teenagers to use; moreover, there is no evidence that ready access to Plan B encourages risky behaviors among teens.

As organizations representing medical professionals, we all share the goal of lowering the rates of unintended pregnancy and reducing the number of abortions in the United States. The science shows conclusively that Plan B is safe for all women and should be available over-the-counter to all women. Accordingly, we urge you to remove the age restriction for over-the-counter access

¹ See, e.g. Wilkinson T et al. Pharmacy Communication to Adolescents and Their Physicians Regarding Access to Emergency Contraception. *Pediatrics*. 2012;129(4):624-629.

for Plan B One-Step. We believe that you will find, as our organizations have found, that the best medical evidence supports the availability of this essential medication over-the-counter to all who need it.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Medical Association
American Society for Emergency Contraception
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine