

Mary Beth O'Connell, PharmD  
502 Grixdale  
Waterford, MI 48328

Subject: HB 5436 Pharmacists Prescribing Birth Control  
HB 5435 Insurance Coverage for Pharmacists Prescribed Birth Control  
HB 5013 12 Month Birth Control Supply

March 3, 2024

Dear Chair Rogers and the Health Policy Committee Members,

I am writing to urge your support of these three bills that will enable women to acquire affordable and easily accessible birth control medications from community pharmacists. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 43% of pregnancies are unintended.<sup>1</sup> That's almost 1 out of 2 pregnancies being unintended. Unintended pregnancies generate a cost to the country of \$21 billion dollars in 2010.<sup>2</sup> No doubt these costs are higher in today's economy. Unintended pregnancies can result in short and long term medical issues and negative economic consequences for both the mother and baby. Healthy People 2030's public health goals include decreasing unintended pregnancies to 36.5% and increasing birth control use.<sup>1</sup> Michigan female college students feel birth control access issues and cost were barriers to preventing unintended pregnancies.<sup>3</sup>

Michigan pharmacists can solve this access and affordability problem for women wanting birth control. Twenty seven states and Washington DC already allow their community pharmacists to prescribe birth control.<sup>4</sup> So what we are asking for has already been implemented and found to be successful. In fact, Oregon's community pharmacists have prescribed birth control since 2015. They have shown this service over two years decreased 51 unintended pregnancies and saved the government \$1.6 million from health care costs from the pregnancies prevented.<sup>5</sup>

From my research on pharmacists prescribing contraception in our state, 68% to 83% of Michigan female college students from Republican and Democratic political affiliations, from all races, ethnicities, and religions, and from various parts of our state feel confident in pharmacists prescribing birth control and would use this service.<sup>3</sup> During COVID, many women still would consider getting birth control prescribed from a pharmacist, however the percentages were a bit lower.<sup>6</sup>

Pharmacists are ready to add this prescribing service to their abilities to test and treat and prescribe and administer vaccinations. My research shows that in the middle and southeast side of the state 60 - 67% of pharmacies stated they are willing to provide this contraception service.<sup>7</sup> As lack of reimbursement was a major limitation to providing the service, I suspect more pharmacies would be willing to do so if this valuable service was also reimbursed (HB 5435). We are beginning to educate student pharmacists to provide this service upon graduation. Therefore, please vote in favor of HB 5436.

The reimbursement bill (HB 5435) is also important as pharmacies do not have the margin to give away free services. Furthermore, all the other health care professionals that prescribe birth control are being reimbursed for this essential service. The cost of paying for birth control to prevent pregnancies is far less than the cost of medical care for mother and baby.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, please vote in favor of HB5435.

As affordability and access are major issues in continuous use of birth control, having women be able to obtain one year's supply of contraception is critical. In today's health delivery market, obtaining primary care visits is very hard and expensive if you don't have a provider. Even telehealth calls are getting difficult. For some women, just missing one or two pills can have a catastrophic event of having

an unintended pregnancy. Contraception is cost effective. For every dollar spent on birth control pills, the health care system/government/payers saved \$4 (in 2009 dollars, which would be higher today).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, please vote in favor of HB 5013.

Thank you for continuing to work hard to improve prevention and treatment of medical conditions, increase health care access, and improve wellbeing of Michiganders. If you need additional information, please contact me at [mboconnell28@gmail.com](mailto:mboconnell28@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Beth O'Connell".

Mary Beth O'Connell, PharmD, BCPS, FASHP, FCCP, FNAP, AGSF  
Principal Editor of Women's Health Across the Lifespan: A Pharmacotherapeutic Approach, 2023

References: 1. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/family-planning> 2. <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/public-costs-unintended-pregnancies-and-role-public-insurance-programs-paying-pregnancy> 3. Pharmacy 20;8:99. doi:10.3390/pharmacy8020099. 4. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/get-birth-control-from-pharmacists-states-map-rcna93146> 5. Obstet Gynecol 19;133:1238-46. 5. 6. Pharmacy 22;10:142. 7. JACCP 22;5:1253-1262. 8. Am J Pub Hlth 09;99:446-451. 9. Am J Pub Hlth 09;99:446-451.