



To: House Finance
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition (email protectrihealth@gmail.com)
Date: May 15, 2024
Re: **SUPPORT H7255 – to protect access to affordable contraception**

The Protect Our HealthCare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all. The Coalition **supports House Bill 7255** to protect access to affordable contraception.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) changed insurance practices, making them fairer for health insurance consumers, and improving access to essential benefits and preventative care. Among the ACA's requirements, insurers can't charge out-of-pocket fees for essential preventive services such as birth control, cancer screenings, flu shots and annual wellness visits. This emphasis on essential health benefits and no-cost-share preventative services helps keep people healthy while saving money by keeping more people out of downstream, higher-cost care. Due to the work of many in Rhode Island's General Assembly, Rhode Island has codified these important provisions in state law.

This bill continues that work by updating the 2000 Rhode Island state law mandating coverage of contraception. It improves access by ensuring no-cost coverage for alternate therapeutics if needed and for over-the-counter methods without prescription. A woman's ability to use her insurance card to access over-the-counter birth control without a prescription helps ensure continuity in access, helping to eliminate gaps in contraceptive use, fulfilling the ACA's intent. The FDA's recent approval of Opill, the first ever over-the-counter (OTC) birth control pill, is a huge step forward in making contraception more accessible, and cost – or the requirement to seek a prescription to access coverage for the cost -- should not diminish the impact of that milestone.

Doing all that we can to ensure access to affordable and reliable contraception is vital because it benefits both women and their families through improved economic self-sufficiency and [improved maternal](#) and child health¹. Unintended pregnancies are [shown](#) to have higher rates of maternal depression and poor birth outcomes, including preterm birth and poor mental and physical functioning during early childhood². The post-ACA upswing in the use of long-acting reversible contraception (LARCs) has [demonstrated](#) an impressive reduction in unintended pregnancies and abortions³.

Thank you.

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners and allies: Economic Progress Institute, Mental Health Association RI, RI NOW, RIPIN, Health Center Association of RI, The Womxn Project, United Way of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, Foster Forward, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, Oasis Wellness & Recovery Center, RI Community Food Bank, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), Thundermist Health Center, National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, Advocates for Better Care

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19644742/>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK232137/>

³ <https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/bitstream/handle/1774.2/63939/CHRISTIANSEN-DISSERTATION-2021.pdf?sequence=1>