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Contact: Bill Albert  
202-478-8510

## **Affordable Access to Contraceptive Methods is Essential** **A Statement from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen** **and Unplanned Pregnancy**

Washington, DC—Modern contraception is recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While it is widely used and accepted in the United States, contraception has once again become the focus of intense policy, political, and legal debates. In the midst of these discussions, let's not lose sight of the fact that the ability to plan and space pregnancies has widespread and well-documented [benefits](#) for women, children, and society. Ensuring that all women have affordable access to the full range of FDA-approved contraceptive methods is essential to continued advancements in educational and economic opportunities, improved maternal and infant health, greater family well-being, fewer abortions, and reduced public and private costs. Here are some key facts to keep in mind:

- **Contraception is not abortion.** Although people of good will may disagree, medical experts draw a clear distinction between contraception and abortion. There is a long-standing medical process for determining what drugs and devices are contraceptives, and this science results in the FDA-approved list of contraceptives.
- **Contraception reduces abortion.** Half (49%) of all pregnancies in the U.S. are described by women themselves as unplanned, and nearly half (44%) of these end in abortion. In 2010, publicly-funded contraception helped women prevent 2.2 million unintended pregnancies, which would have resulted in 1.1 million unplanned births and 760,000 abortions. Recent research from Missouri and Iowa shows that when cost is removed as a barrier and women can choose from the full range of birth control methods, including the most effective ones, there were dramatic declines in unplanned pregnancy and abortion.
- **Contraception saves money.** Affordable access to contraception saves taxpayers dollars—providing public funding for contraception saves approximately \$6 for

every \$1 spent. Furthermore, employers and insurers benefit as well. A study found that the cost of offering family planning coverage to employees is minimal, accounting for less than 1% of total employee coverage costs. These costs are easily offset by savings to the employer due to averted unplanned births. In fact, the National Business Group on Health recommends that employers offer unintended pregnancy prevention services including coverage of all FDA-approved prescription methods at no cost to employees based on evidence that they result in cost savings to companies.

- **The best methods of contraception are not cheap or easy to get.** Not all contraception is created equally. Those who say birth control is cheap and can easily be purchased at places like Walmart or CVS are likely referring to condoms and some low cost generic pills. Many people can't use these pills for medical reasons or, in consultation with their doctors, have chosen another method that is more effective for them. What's more, almost all methods require one or more visits to a doctor. Even with insurance, low maintenance, long-acting methods of birth control, which are the most effective, have traditionally been out of reach for some women due to high co-pays and deductibles.
- **There is broad support for contraception.** Almost all Americans (95% of Democrats and 91% of Republicans) agree that for those trying not to get pregnant, using birth control is taking personal responsibility. In fact, 73% of adults (78% of Democrats and 68% of Republicans) believe that policymakers who are opposed to abortion should be strong supporters of birth control. How can it be that contraception, which is used by 99% of American women at some point in their lives, is controversial?

In a rare editorial, the *New England Journal of Medicine* recently articulated the issue—if women's ability to choose from the full range of contraceptive methods is hindered by cost or lack of coverage they are not getting high quality medical care. Given the [benefits](#) of contraception to achieving widely-shared health, economic, and social goals, this runs contrary to the public good.

**About The National Campaign.** The National Campaign is a private, non-profit organization that seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families by preventing teen and unplanned pregnancy. Please visit [www.TheNationalCampaign.org](http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org) to find out more.