

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1281
Mistie Tolman (Legislative Director, Planned Parenthood Votes)

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Mistie Tolman. I am the Legislative Director for Planned Parenthood Votes in Idaho. I am here today in strong support of Senate Bill 1281.

Planned Parenthood provides high-quality, evidence-based health care to patients in Idaho and across the country. This includes providing patients with the full range of contraceptive methods and the counseling necessary to ensure that patients receive the method that will best suit their unique needs. In 2016 over 90% of the services provided at our health centers were preventive services such as contraception.

Consistent use of birth control is the best way to reduce unintended pregnancies and abortions. Senate Bill 1281 would require private insurance to cover a year's supply of contraception, dispensed on-site at the provider's office if available. This bill would improve access to birth control, particularly for women living in rural parts of our state. In turn it would also decrease unintended pregnancies, decrease the need for abortions, and save money for insurance plans.

This bill would have a huge impact for women and families, especially in a state as rural as Idaho. Women without reliable access to transportation or who live in rural areas have more barriers to dependable access to birth control, making it more likely that they will experience an unintended pregnancy. In fact, one in four women say they have missed pills because they could not get the next pack in time, and the 19% of women who inconsistently use birth control account for 43% of unintended pregnancies. While hormonal birth control is over 95% effective with perfect use, monthly trips to the pharmacy can make perfect use difficult or impossible for many women.

Improving access to contraception is the best way to reduce unintended pregnancies and abortions. One study found that providing a 12-month supply of birth control decreased unintended pregnancies by 30 percent compared with a supply of just one or three months. This same study found that giving women a year's supply of birth control reduced the odds of those women obtaining an abortion by 46 percent.

This bill would make a real difference for women in our state, and it would also be cost-effective to both insurance plans and our state budget. Research has shown that insurance plans that dispense a one-year's supply of birth control instead of limiting dispensing to one or three cycles lower their direct costs on follow-up visits and pregnancy tests, as well as long-term unintended pregnancy management.

Thank you for holding a hearing on this important bill. We encourage members of this committee to support Senate Bill 1281 and move it to the floor.

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