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Sonia Ossorio
President, NOW-NYC
212.627.9895

ACCESS TO BIRTH CONTROL UNDER ATTACK ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Price of Oral Contraceptives Doubling and Tripling at Student Health Centers

According to recent news reports, millions of college students are facing a steep hike in the price of oral contraceptives available at their student health centers, raising concerns that some will turn to less effective contraceptives or stop using them.

Birth control prices are doubling - even tripling - on college campuses across the country thanks to a change in a Medicaid rebate law that ends an incentive for drug companies to offer discounts to colleges.

“When young women, particularly those with financial limitations, face a sudden obstacle in their path to obtain birth control, it’s only expected that some may be dissuaded from pursuing contraception methods,” said Sonia Ossorio, president of NOW-NYC. “It’s outrageous that women are expected to shoulder an unreasonable and abrupt raise in price so that pharmaceutical companies can save money.”

The potential outcomes of an increase in price of contraceptives— including a decrease in the use of birth control, and a rise in the number of unplanned pregnancies and abortions - were seemingly overlooked when the decision to alter the law was made. According to CNN, the change was a result of a chain reaction that was activated by a 2005 deficit-reduction bill focusing on Medicaid.

The price hike is only one of several attempts to undermine women’s right to unequivocally exercise reproductive autonomy. In the past few years, the Bush administration has introduced a series of measures that anger pro-choice activists, including proclaiming a "National Sanctity of Human Life Day" in a statement that likened abortion to terrorism, working to overturn the FDA's approval of mifepristone (also known as RU-486, or the "abortion pill"), and withdrawing support from a population control program that stresses access to reproductive health care and education.

The National Organization for Women is the nation’s largest organization working to advance women’s rights and improve women’s lives. The New York City Chapter of NOW, founded in 1966, is the largest chapter in the country with 7,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to protect women’s reproductive choices, end violence against women and eliminate sex discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and the justice system in New York.