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## R SHEET ON PHARMACY ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTION IN ILLINOIS

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### BACKGROUND

In the last several years, 10 states and the District of Columbia have passed pharmacy access bills, which allow pharmacists to prescribe hormonal contraception to women. These efforts expand the scope-of-practice for pharmacists and increase access to birth control for women—especially those who may not have a regular physician or find that an appointment is too costly. Such advances are critical to the prevention of unintended pregnancies.

In 2010, 52 percent of pregnancies in Illinois were unintended. When compared to the national average—45 percent in 2011—this is high. Adopting the pharmacy access model in Illinois would therefore offer women increased access to effective contraception and would, in turn, help avoid unintended pregnancies and their effects.

Unintended pregnancies in Illinois are costly. In 2010, federal and state funds paid for over 78 percent of unplanned births in Illinois. This amounted to over \$927 million—\$352 million of which was shouldered by the state government.

### CURRENT DEBATE

Pharmacy access has seen little opposition in the medical community. In fact, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) believes that no prescription should be necessary for hormonal contraception like birth control pills.

While, over-the-counter access to birth control is a federal issue, states have been increasingly implementing the pharmacy access model with the goal of expanding consumer access. Since 2015, states as politically diverse as Utah and Oregon have begun to allow pharmacists to prescribe hormonal contraception.

### SUMMARY

- Many women have limited access to contraception.
- Over half of pregnancies in Illinois are unintended.
- Taxpayers spent nearly \$1 billion covering the medical costs associated with unintended pregnancies in 2010.
- Adopting a pharmacy access model would allow pharmacists to prescribe contraception, which they are qualified to do, and would give women more family planning options.

Pharmacy access is crucial for two reasons. First, it allows women to have an increased number of contraception providers. Pharmacies are typically much more prevalent than doctor's offices, especially in rural parts of the state. Second, it expands the scope-of-practice for pharmacists who already provide the services needed for a birth control examination. Current regulations impede pharmacists' ability with no credible rationale.

Allowing pharmacists to prescribe birth control follows a successful precedent in other states and has the potential to reduce the tax burden related to unintended pregnancies and abortions. This can be done without negative side effects, because hormonal contraception is a safe, time-tested and effective method of avoiding unwanted pregnancy.

### ACTION ITEMS

The pharmacy access model removes unnecessary regulations; provides women with more accessible healthcare options; and reduces public health expenditures.

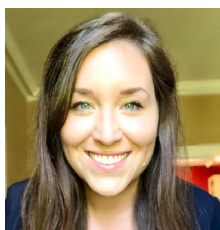
Pharmacy access to contraception also allows pharmacists to perform a medical service that is well within their expertise. Encouraging pharmacists to become birth

control providers, especially in rural areas, increases access to medical care in areas that typically lack providers.

For these reasons, Illinois should consider implementing the pharmacy access model to allow pharmacists to prescribe birth control to patients seeking a provider. This model has already passed and is working in a number of states since 2015, and it is time for Illinois to follow suit.

## CONTACT US

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