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Testimony from:
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Testimony in Support of SF 1960

March 12, 2020

Minnesota State Senate, Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

Chairwoman Benson and members of the committee,

My name is Courtney Joslin, and I am a commercial freedom fellow for the R Street Institute, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government in many areas, including access to hormonal contraception in the states. I lead R Street's work on the pharmacy access model. We support SF 1960 in its entirety, but would like to expand on the benefits of better access to birth control specifically.

11 states and Washington, D.C. now allow pharmacists to prescribe hormonal contraception directly to patients. This measure benefits patients, taxpayers and the medical community.

First, expanding the number of medical professionals who can prescribe birth control gives women better access to safe and effective contraception. In Minnesota, 40 percent of pregnancies were unintended in 2010.¹ Furthermore, rural parts of Minnesota, like much of the rest of the country, suffer when it comes to primary care access.² Combined, this means that Minnesotan women seeking convenient and safe family planning options can benefit from the option of seeing a pharmacist for a birth control prescription.

Allowing pharmacists to prescribe birth control means that more women can achieve their family planning desires and avoid unintended pregnancies. As it stands, taxpayers fund many of the medical costs associated with unintended pregnancies. In Minnesota, for example, taxpayers covered \$332.6 million in medical care for unintended pregnancies in 2010 alone; the Minnesota state government

¹ "State Facts About Unintended Pregnancy: Minnesota." Guttmacher Institute.
https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/mn_17.pdf.

² Joey Peters, "How foreign-trained doctors are filling the health care gap in Greater Minnesota." *MinnPost*, Dec. 19, 2017.
<https://www.minnpost.com/new-americans-greater-minnesota/2017/12/how-foreign-trained-doctors-are-filling-health-care-gap-grea/>.

shouldered almost \$129 million of that.³ Not only does unintended pregnancy put a strain on mothers and families—it strains state budgets, too.

Finally, pharmacy access to contraception is a safe measure largely endorsed by the medical community. Pharmacists are medication experts and can easily identify any contraindications that a patient may have for hormonal birth control. Additionally, many medical organizations, such as the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists all support increasing access further by making birth control available over the counter.⁴ This reform, however, would require federal action; in the meantime, states can take initiative by clearing pharmacists for prescription authority where appropriate.

The pharmacy access model is a sensible measure that would benefit Minnesotans in several ways. It would expand patient access, potentially reduce public spending on unintended pregnancies and maintain a high-quality medical care system. Most importantly, it does all of this without increasing risks. For these reasons, we endorse passing SF 1960.

Thank you for your time.

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³ Adam Sonfield and Kathryn Kost, “Public Costs from Unintended Pregnancies and the Role of Public Insurance Programs in Paying for Pregnancy-Related Care: National and State Estimates for 2010.” Guttmacher Institute. February 2015. <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/public-costs-unintended-pregnancies-and-role-public-insurance-programs-paying-pregnancy>.

⁴ Eileen Francis, “AMA Encourages Oral Contraceptive OTC Options in Policy Update.” Pink Sheet, June 21, 2018. <https://pink.pharmaintelligence.informa.com/PS123343/AMA-Encourages-Oral-Contraceptive-OTC-Options-In-Policy-Update>.

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“ACOG Updates Guidance on Over-the-Counter Access to Hormonal Contraception.” The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Sept. 24, 2019. <https://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2019/ACOG-Updates-Guidance-on-Over-the-Counter-Access-to-Hormonal-Contraception>.