



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate approves more convenient access to birth control

HB 2879 will allow pharmacists to prescribe birth control

SALEM – The Senate approved legislation this morning that will allow women to go directly to a pharmacist to get a prescription for birth control pills. House Bill 2879 directs the state Board of Pharmacy to adopt rules to allow licensed pharmacists to prescribe and dispense oral contraceptives and hormonal contraceptive patches to women.

“The risks of pregnancy are greater than the risks of taking oral contraceptives,” said Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Portland), who carried the bill on the floor. “I am confident that through the self-assessment tool required in HB 2879, women will be able to identify risk factors and make safe choices. This bill will provide timely and convenient access for Oregon women, thus decreasing unintended pregnancies.”

Currently under Oregon law, pharmacists are allowed to dispense emergency contraceptives without a physician’s prescription. Studies have shown that requiring a health care practitioner’s prescription for birth control can be an obstacle to access and effective use, especially among low-income women. Research shows that over the counter access to oral and patch contraceptives is safe, and it is clearly documented that increased access to contraceptives contributes to a decreased rate of unintended pregnancies.

“This session Oregon has led the nation in expanding access to birth control,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “After passing groundbreaking legislation allowing women to access a full year’s worth of birth control, this bill furthers the Oregon Legislature’s leadership in protecting women’s health.”

Specifically, HB 2879 requires the Oregon Board of Pharmacy to consult with nurses, physicians, and the Oregon Health Authority in adopting rules to allow licensed pharmacists to prescribe and dispense contraceptive pills and patches to women. The rules will require that pharmacists receive training related to contraceptives, will direct pharmacists to encourage ongoing care by referring patients to health care practitioners when they dispense contraceptives, and will require that pharmacists provide a self-screening risk assessment tool that a patient must complete prior to receiving a prescription. Under the bill, women over 18 will be able to access birth control directly from a pharmacist without a prior prescription, while women under 18 must have evidence of a previous prescription from a health care practitioner in order to obtain contraceptives from a pharmacist.

Upon passage of HB 2879, Oregon will join California as the only two states with laws allowing women to go directly to a pharmacist to get a prescription for birth control pills. HB 2879 will now go to the House of Representatives for concurrence.

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