



May 29, 2015

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### Dear Working Group Member,

Last week Senators Ayotte (R-NH) and Gardner (R-CO) introduced the Allowing Greater Access to Safe and Effective Contraception Act. This bill would provide incentives for pharmaceutical companies to put forward applications to switch to OTC status "regular use" contraceptives for use by people aged 18 and older, and remove the prescription requirement for OTC drugs purchased using health savings accounts.

Below we share the statement about the bill by Ibis Reproductive Health, which convenes this working group. The text of the bill is available [here](#).

We welcome questions, concerns, and opinions about the bill, and we will continue to share new developments about this bill and other relevant bills and policies in development at the federal and state levels.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan", is positioned below the text "Thanks,".

Daniel Grossman, MD  
Vice President for Research, Ibis Reproductive Health

### Ibis statement on the Allowing Greater Access to Safe and Effective Contraception Act

Ibis Reproductive Health convenes the [Oral Contraceptives \(OCs\) Over-the-Counter \(OTC\) Working Group](#), a coalition of researchers, advocates, and health care providers that is working to move an OC OTC to improve access to safe and highly effective contraception, especially for those who could benefit most from easier access to high-quality contraceptive care. The OCs OTC Working Group was formed in 2004 and Ibis has collaborated on key research

studies that have assessed the feasibility and potential impact of an OTC switch for OCs.

The evidence is clear: OCs meet the US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) criteria to be available OTC; OTC access could potentially improve uptake and continuation of OC use, which could help to reduce unintended pregnancy; and women are interested in an OTC OC.

The [Allowing Greater Access to Safe and Effective Contraception Act](#), recently introduced in the Senate, offers an intriguing possibility to speed up efforts to make an OTC OC a reality by incentivizing companies to apply to the FDA for a prescription-to-OTC switch for OCs and possibly other types of contraceptives. However, these incentives only apply to contraceptives offered OTC to people aged 18 and older.

We firmly believe that any OTC contraceptive product should be available to anyone who needs it with no age restriction, and there is no medical reason to bar teens from accessing an OTC OC. In addition to the obstacles for younger women, a documentation requirement can be a barrier for anyone without government-issued identification, including immigrants and people with disabilities who may not have a driver's license. Legislating an age restriction would also interfere with the FDA approval process which should be driven by the data. The FDA will make the ultimate decision about whether to approve or deny a sponsor's application to switch an OC product from prescription-only to OTC; its process must not become politicized, as it did during the very long road to move levonorgestrel emergency contraception OTC.

Additionally, under the health care law, OTC birth control methods for women (along with all other FDA-approved methods) must be covered without cost sharing by most insurers, but they may require a prescription first, which makes them much less convenient and more expensive. In order to ensure access for all, and especially for low-income and young people, it is essential that insurance cover a future OTC OC without requiring a prescription-and any bill aimed at improving contraceptive access should address that.

"This bill highlights the need for greater access to contraception and can help us to advance the conversation about ensuring all women have access to a pill that is low cost, covered by insurance, and easy to obtain," said Kelly Blanchard, president of Ibis Reproductive Health. "We will continue to work to ensure an OTC pill is available to people of all ages and is fully covered by insurance."

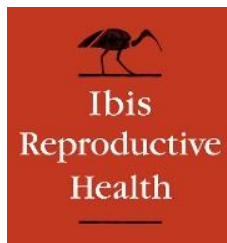
We welcome a broader public discussion on this topic and look forward to seeing OCs on pharmacy shelves in the near future. Please see [www.ocsotc.org](http://www.ocsotc.org) and [www.freethepill.org](http://www.freethepill.org) for more information. For media inquiries, please contact [Britt Wahlin](#).

## About us

The Oral Contraceptives (OCs) Over-the-Counter (OTC) Working Group is an informal coalition of reproductive health and rights organizations, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, university-based researchers, and prominent clinicians who share an interest in women's health and access to contraception. Our goal is to evaluate objectively the risks and benefits of demedicalizing contraceptive care, with an eye toward improving access to OCs and

potentially other hormonal contraceptive methods by making them available without a prescription.

The working group is coordinated by Ibis Reproductive Health.



[www.ibisreproductivehealth.org](http://www.ibisreproductivehealth.org)

## Contact us

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