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## Dear Working Group member,

I am thrilled to announce the launch of [Free the Pill on Instagram!](#) We hope you'll follow us and help spread the news that the campaign is live on Instagram--we've provided sample social copy below. And as a sweet bonus, one of our first 150 followers will win a Free the Pill swag bag!

Next month on March 7 at 2pm ET, we are also excited to host a webinar with the [Native American Community Board](#), a working group partner, which will bring attention to the barriers to birth control access in the Native American community, and the potential of an OTC birth control pill to reduce some of these barriers. [Register here!](#)

In this update, we share five new state-level contraceptive coverage bills that include OTC coverage. We also highlight a study led by Free the Pill Project Manager Carmela Zuniga and working group members from [Ibis Reproductive Health](#) and [Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health \(ANSIRH\)](#) at UCSF, which compares and evaluates online birth control prescribing platforms currently available in the United States.

We also remember James Trussell, a founding member of the working group whose research contributions and commitment to the effort have helped lead us to where we are today. James passed away in December after a brief illness.

And finally, in our media highlights, we share a recent [op-ed](#) from Jane Liu of the [National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum](#), a working group partner, on the potential effects of the current administration's proposed birth control rules, including the impact on the Asian American

and Pacific Islander community, and an article in [Brides](#), which provides an overview of our effort to bring a birth control pill OTC.

With gratitude,



Kate Grindlay Kelly  
Project Director/Associate  
Ibis Reproductive Health

### Free the Pill expands to Instagram, and a call to action!

Free the Pill is now officially on [Instagram](#)! Please help us build a strong community of followers in our movement to free the pill in the United States. Here are some sample social posts:

#### Facebook

Free the Pill is dedicated to making a birth control pill available OTC in the United States. Follow the campaign on [Instagram](#) to join this movement to make this a reality! P.S. One of the first 150 followers will win a Free the Pill swag bag! #FreeThePill

#### Twitter

We ♥ the pill and we want it available over the counter. Follow #FreeThePill campaign on Instagram to join this movement to make this a reality (and get the chance to win a swag bag)! [https://www.instagram.com/free\\_the\\_pill/](https://www.instagram.com/free_the_pill/)

#### Instagram

Free the Pill is dedicated to making a birth control pill available OTC in the United States and I'm proud to be part of this effort! Follow the campaign [@free\\_the\\_pill](#) to learn more! P.S. One of the first 150 followers will win a Free the Pill swag bag! #FreeThePill

### Webinar highlighting barriers to birth control among the Native American community

We invite you to join us for a webinar featuring members of the [Native American Community Board](#), a working group partner, which will present their experiences "indigenizing" Free the Pill and bringing the campaign to reservations across the United States. They will also discuss barriers to birth control on reservations, at the Indian Health Service, and in rural areas. The webinar will take place Thursday, March 7 from 2-3pm ET. [Register here](#).

### State-level contraceptive coverage bills

States continue to lead the way to ensure insurance coverage for a future OTC birth control pill. We look forward to sharing additional legislation that includes OTC contraceptive coverage in future updates and promoting the growing popularity of these provisions.

## Hawaii

Bills: [HB1087/SB1043](#)

Status: Active (Senate Committee on Judiciary will hold public decision making on February 22, 2019)

## Minnesota

Bills: [HF963/SF1084](#)

Status: Active (Recently introduced; referred to committee)

## New Mexico

Bill: [HB 89](#)

Status: Active (Passed New Mexico House of Representatives on February 18, 2019; headed to New Mexico Senate)

*Santa Fe New Mexican*: [House OKs bill for insurers to cover contraceptives](#)

## New York

Bill: [A00585/S00659](#)

Status: Active (Passed Assembly; returned to Senate)

## Virginia

Bills: [HB 2378/SB 1132](#)

Status: Not Active (Defeated in Committee on Commerce and Labor on January 31, 2019)

### New study assessing online platforms for birth control prescriptions

Last month, the [results of a study](#) by working group members from Ibis Reproductive Health and Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH) at UCSF were published in the *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*. The study looked at the prescribing processes and policies of online birth control prescription platforms available in the United States, and found that the platforms prescribing oral contraception through telemedicine services were adequately screening for contraindications. Lead author Carmela Zuniga, Free the Pill project manager and working group member, further describes the findings in this [Contemporary OB/GYN](#) article.

**Zuniga C, Grossman D, Harrell S, Blanchard K, Grindlay K.** Breaking down barriers to birth control access: An assessment of online platforms prescribing birth control in the

USA. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*. 2019. DOI: 10.1177/1357633X18824828. [Epub ahead of print]

For access to the full-text paper, please email [Niara Lezama](mailto:Niara.Lezama).

## Remembering James Trussell's contributions to the working group

James Trussell, a founding member of the OCs OTC Working Group, passed away in December after a brief illness. James was among the first to argue that birth control pills should be available over the counter, collaborating with Ibis's founder, [Charlotte Ellertson](#), and other colleagues to make the case in a paper published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in August 1993, "[Should oral contraceptives be available without prescription.](#)" We are grateful for James's commitment to expanding access to oral contraception and for his partnership in our effort to bring a birth control pill OTC in the United States.

## Media highlights

Jan Liu of the [National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum](#), a working group partner, shared why the fight for insurance coverage of birth control is so critical in an op-ed for [Rewire.News](#).

*"Race, financial ability, immigration status, language competency, and other factors play a significant role in determining who can have access to birth control, what type, and when. That is why health insurance coverage of birth control through employers and universities is so important: It allows broader access for many who already face barriers in obtaining contraceptives."*

Click to share this article on Twitter:

[Health insurance coverage of birth control \(including a future OTC pill\) is critical, and here's why:](#)

In a [Brides story](#), Britt Wahlin, working group steering committee member and vice president of development and public affairs at [Ibis Reproductive Health](#), described the benefits of an OTC birth control pill, the process for an Rx-to-OTC switch, and how states can help ensure a future OTC pill is covered by insurance.

*"One of the major reasons behind the push for easier access to birth control pills are the barriers that often get into the way and prevent women from being able to successfully obtain a prescription. According to Wahlin, these include, 'costs related to a doctor's visit, missing work, and transportation.' She adds, 'Making birth control pills available over the counter will lessen financial burdens and make it easier for women to control their health and lives, regardless of how much money they have.'"*

Click to share this article on Twitter:

["Making birth control pills available over the counter will lessen financial burdens and make it easier for women to control their health and lives, regardless of how much money they have." It's time to #FreeThePill](#)

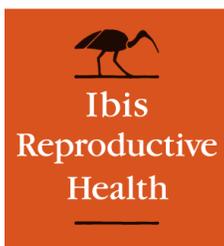
## Signing onto the statement of purpose

Has your organization signed onto our [statement of purpose](#)? Does your organization send a newsletter where you could share information about our work and Free the Pill? Please help us demonstrate the wide support that exists for making OCs available OTC in the United States. [Email Mary](#) to let her know!

## About us

The Oral Contraceptives (OCs) Over-the-Counter (OTC) Working Group is a coalition of reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, university-based researchers, and prominent clinicians who share a commitment to providing all women of reproductive age easier access to safe, effective, acceptable, and affordable contraceptives. The working group was established in 2004 to explore the potential of over-the-counter access to oral contraceptives to reduce disparities in reproductive health care access and outcomes, and to increase opportunities for women to access a safe, effective method of contraception, free of unnecessary control, as part of a healthy sexual and reproductive life.

The working group is coordinated by Ibis Reproductive Health.



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

## Contact us

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