



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 527 – Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support for Senate Bill (SB) 527 – Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements. SB 527 requires each community college to develop and implement a plan to provide students with access to over-the-counter contraception. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Department, on request, to provide assistance to community colleges in developing and implementing the plans.

Equitable access to high-quality reproductive health services is important for the health, social, and economic well-being of individuals throughout their lives.¹ According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, all youth (aged 11-25 years old) are entitled to comprehensive, confidential, and accessible sexual and reproductive health care, including contraception access and counseling, and abortion care services.² Community college students are more likely to be uninsured and have lower incomes, both of which are barriers that increase difficulty in accessing contraceptive care.³ Young people (aged 15-24 years) account for almost 50 percent of new sexually transmitted infections, but only represent 25 percent of the sexually active population.⁴ College-aged youth have a greater risk of negative health outcomes from sexual behavior. Twenty-nine percent of this population have reported not wearing condoms, and 11 percent have reported not using birth control.⁵ When college-aged youth have access to comprehensive reproductive health care, they are better able to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

¹ Resources on Reproductive Health, Equity, & Society. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. <https://www.nationalacademies.org/topics/reproductive-health-equity-society>

² American Academy of Pediatrics. Equitable Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care for All Youth. <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/adolescent-sexual-health/equitable-access-to-sexual-and-reproductive-health-care-for-all-youth/>

³ Yarger J, Schroeder R, Blum M, Cabral MA, Brindis CD, Perelli B, Harper CC. Concerns About the Cost of Contraception Among Young Women Attending Community College. *Women's Health Issues*. 2021;31(5):420-5. doi: 10.1016/j.whi.2021.03.006

⁴ Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance, 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/statistics/2022/overview.htm>

⁵ Lechner KE, Garcia CM, Frerich EA, Lust K, Eisenberg ME. College students' sexual health: personal responsibility or the responsibility of the college? *J Am Coll Health*. 2013;61(1):28-35. doi: 10.1080/07448481.2012.750608. PMID: 23305542; PMCID: PMC4142756.

The Department surveyed the 16 community colleges (22 total campuses) in the State and found that 7 campuses were identified to have a student health center present on campus and 15 campuses do not. Vending machines are an option that at least 50 college campuses across the country have utilized to expand access to over-the-counter medication and sexual health products.⁶ In Maryland, Johns Hopkins University and Towson University have already implemented vending machines that contain over-the-counter contraception on campus.⁷

The Department is in support of SB527 which prioritizes the reproductive health of community college students in the state by increasing access to over-the-counter contraception.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Herrera Scott", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

⁶ Colleges and Universities with EC Vending Machine Sites. American Society for Emergency Contraception. <https://www.ec4ec.org/ec-vending-machines/>

⁷ *Id.*