

Written Testimony for HB 939: Maryland Commission for Women - Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of Coverage of Over-the-Counter Birth Control - Please **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Dear Health & Government Operations Committee:

This bill reads "...Requiring the Maryland Commission for Women to establish the Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of Coverage of Over-the-Counter Birth Control to study access to over-the-counter birth control; and requiring the Collaborative to submit an interim report by January 1, 2026, and a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 2027..."

While I understand that this bill is only establishing a collaboration (group) to study access to over-the-counter birth control, I would like to share a personal story with you about birth control. I have a son who had a mild developmental challenge when he was a young boy. That led to having a developmental pediatrician require a blood draw to test for specific "markers" that may be contributing to the developmental challenge. Once we received the results, the doctor explained how certain genetic "markers" were affecting his ability to absorb certain nutrients from food and that we should start him on nutritional supplements. We did that, and he improved greatly.

What does this have to do with birth control, you ask? I also found out that, as his mother, I contributed to passing down these genetic "markers", along with his father. As an example, I do not process folate well from the MTHFR genetic alteration in my DNA. Therefore, I have to take a nutritional supplement for it, a more "broken down" form of folate that my body more readily processes and absorbs. I tested my other 2 children and they have the same MTHFR genetic alteration. My point is that, since my daughter and I have this alteration, we have to be very careful with taking birth control pills, because this genetic alteration affects how our bodies process the birth control pills. Our OB/GYN has explained that while on various brands and strengths of birth control pills, we have a much higher rate of sustaining blood clots. Therefore, we would need to be closely monitored to make sure that we would not have any side effects or issues that could lead to forming blood clots. This is actually a very common genetic alteration (MTHFR) that many women (and actually men) have.

My point here is that I firmly believe that birth control pills specifically or any other form of birth control that requires a prescription should remain that way, so that a doctor can monitor people closely for any side effects. The genetic alteration that my daughter and

I have is NOT something that I would have ever thought to test for, and that could have led to some very painful and possibly life threatening events.

I understand wanting to make birth control “accessible” for all. But maybe birth control pills should require a prescription for a reason. Do any of you have wives, girlfriends, daughters, granddaughters, nieces or other women in your lives? Maybe we should err on the side of caution and always have birth control pills remain a medication that should require a prescription and NOT ever be over-the-counter. I would really hate for any woman to find out the hard way by taking over-the-counter birth control pills and having serious side effects or serious health consequences.

Some families have diabetes; some have heart issues; some have thyroid issues, etc. These “family” conditions usually have genetic roots. But sometimes there are things that we simply cannot know.

My husband and I have shared this with our daughter, so that, if she ever decides to use birth control pills in the future, she knows to have an OB/GYN monitor her closely to make sure nothing bad happens.

I appreciate you taking the time to read my personal story. I simply don’t want to see any women hurt because of something they could not possibly know about themselves.

Thank you for your courtesy, time and attention.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals

A Very Concerned Mother of 3 and Maryland Resident