



**To: Madame Chair and Members of the Committee**

**From: Bria Goode; Senior Policy, Advocacy, and Research Manager; Ibis Reproductive Health**

**Date: February 18, 2025**

**RE: Technical Expertise Regarding HB 939 - Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of Coverage of Over-the-Counter Birth Control**

My name is Bria Goode, and I serve as the Senior Policy, Advocacy, and Research Manager for Free the Pill, a project of Ibis Reproductive Health dedicated to expanding access to and coverage of over-the-counter birth control. I appreciate the opportunity to provide technical expertise and additional information for House Bill 939. This bill requires 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 and coverage of over-the-counter birth control.

On July 13, 2023, the Food and Drug Administration approved Opill, a progestin-only birth control pill (POP), for over the-counter (OTC) use and in March 2024 it began to appear on retailers' shelves. This groundbreaking advancement in reproductive health access would not have been possible without the Free the Pill coalition, which recognized the potential of OTC birth control pills and worked for nearly two decades to build the evidence, support, and partnerships necessary to expand equitable access to contraception. Opill's availability on shelves nationwide is a historic achievement and now that people in the US have access to a birth control pill without a prescription, we've greatly expanded access to critical reproductive health care. As we celebrate Opill being available without a prescription as a movement-driven win, we also recognize that at the suggested retail price of \$19.99 per monthly pack, there is more work to do to ensure that it is equitably accessible. A [study](#) and [poll](#) assessing U.S. women's and teens' interest in OTC birth control pills found that half of respondents interested in using OTC birth control pills would be able to pay \$10 or less per month for them. This included 11% who could not pay anything at all. Currently, under the Affordable Care Act most private health insurance plans must cover all FDA-approved methods of contraception, including OTC products like emergency contraception. However, insurers can—and often do—require a prescription for insurance to cover birth control. This creates unnecessary barriers to affordable access to OTC birth control.

Maryland has continued to expand access to Opill and other OTC birth control items by being the first state to adopt OTC coverage requirements in 2016. As a result, 2.7 million Marylanders now have coverage of OTC birth control. However, several operational challenges, including market segmentation, lack of a uniform billing protocol, little consumer awareness, and lack of coverage at the point-of-sale, have slowed implementation of state coverage requirements. We must ensure that everyone can access birth control no matter who they are, where they live, how much money they make, or what background they come from.

Passing HB 939 and establishing the Maryland Collaborative is a critical step to ensuring OTC birth control coverage is operationalized and implemented properly. By ensuring that coverage is implemented effectively and equitably, this bill will make it easier for Marylanders to access birth control when and where they need it. Establishing an implementation collaborative that brings together key stakeholders—including pharmacists, insurance commissioners, reproductive justice advocates, public health officials, and researchers—will help develop practical solutions to address coverage barriers, educate the public on their options, and ensure seamless access to contraception at pharmacies and other points of sale. This legislation will help transform policy into meaningful, equitable access—breaking down systemic barriers and advancing reproductive justice and autonomy for all.

If I can provide any further information, please contact me at [bgoode@ibisreproductivehealth.org](mailto:bgoode@ibisreproductivehealth.org).