

Testimony In Support of House Bill 0939

Before the Maryland Senate Finance Committee
Maryland Commission for Women – Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of
Coverage of Over-the-Counter Birth Control

February 20th, 2025

Delegate Pena-Melnyk and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 0939. My name is Kate Shamszad, director of policy at the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute. On behalf of my organization, we commend Maryland for taking this critical step in advancing access to over-the-counter (OTC) birth control. My experience serving on the national Free The Pill Coalition, and my organization's experience in New Jersey has demonstrated that coalition-driven strategies are essential to support implementing successful contraceptive coverage policies.

Access to birth control is a fundamental component of reproductive autonomy and public health. Removing barriers to contraception- whether through eliminating prescription requirements or addressing coverage gaps- ensures individuals can make informed decisions about their reproductive health, reduces unintended pregnancies, and improves maternal and infant health outcomes.

Similar to Maryland, New Jersey has been a leader in implementing OTC contraceptive coverage, and when working on reproductive health policy, has found that establishing a robust, multi-sector coalition to support policy advancement, education, and accessibility yields a high rate of engagement and implementation success. This approach can include:

- **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration**
- **Policy Analysis & Adaptation**
- **Consumer Awareness & Public Health Initiatives**
- **Pharmacy Integration & Training**

Through the establishment of the **Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of Coverage of OTC Birth Control**, the bill's inclusion of state agencies, advocacy groups, health insurers, pharmacists, and public health experts will be essential in overcoming barriers to access.

Maryland has long been at the forefront of reproductive health policy, and SB0674 provides an opportunity to cement its leadership in OTC contraceptive access. The **Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of Coverage of OTC Birth Control** will provide a national model for effective coalition-building and policy-driven solutions to ensure all individuals can access contraception without cost or systemic barriers.

I urge the Committee to support House Bill 0939 and invest in a collaborative framework that will further advance reproductive autonomy for all Marylanders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.