



To: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committees

From: Victoria Nichols, Free the Pill Project Director, Ibis Reproductive Health

Dates: February 14, 2024

RE: Information Regarding SB 527 Community Colleges – Contraception – Access - Requirements

I am Victoria Nichols, Project Director for Free the Pill, a project of Ibis Reproductive Health that supports a coalition of more than 200 reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, research and advocacy groups, youth activists, health care providers, prominent medical and health professional associations, and others who share a commitment to ensuring more equitable access to safe, effective, and affordable birth control to people of all ages, backgrounds, and identities in the United States. Coalition members support over-the-counter (OTC) birth control pills that are affordable, fully covered by insurance, and available to people of all ages.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide information on Senate Bill 527 – Community Colleges – Contraceptive – Access Requirements. The bill would require community college campuses in Maryland to provide access to OTC contraception during school hours.

I would like to provide background on a new type of OTC 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. After a comprehensive review of the data and a unanimous advisory committee vote to recommend Opill for over-the-counter status, the FDA followed the science and made a decision that will help expand contraceptive access for those who face the greatest barriers to care. Decades of data show that progestin-only pills are safe, effective, and appropriate for use by people of all ages. The United States will now join over 100 countries where birth control pills are available without a prescription.

Opill will soon be available in most major pharmacies across the country and will be the most effective birth control method available over the counter. It will be on the shelves, just like any other OTC medication, and also sold online. Like other birth control pills, Opill must be taken daily. HB 367/SB 527 would include access to Opill, as it is one of three kinds of OTC contraception.

Free the Pill has been working with state and national partners to develop strategies to ensure Opill is accessible to all people regardless of age, income level, insurance status, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, geographic location, or disability. We have many strong partners in Maryland, as Maryland was the first state to require insurance coverage of OTC contraception. We are pleased to be able to provide information about Opill and OTC contraception as you consider this legislative proposal.

If I can provide any further information, please contact me at vnichols@ibisreproductivehealth.org