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December 8, 2011

Secretary Sebelius,

I write to request a meeting to discuss the Department of Health and Human Services' decision yesterday to overrule the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and deny Teva Women's Health Inc.'s application to make Plan B One-Step emergency contraception available over-the-counter to all women of reproductive age.

As a trusted health care provider to nearly three million people a year, Planned Parenthood sees every day how important it is that women and teenagers have access to health information and the full range of birth control options, including emergency contraception.

All women deserve timely access to emergency contraception and Teva's proposal to lift the unnecessary and burdensome barriers to EC was both based on sound science and in the interest of public health. HHS' decision to overrule the FDA hurts all women by imposing arbitrary restrictions on a product that is only effective when taken in a timely manner.

In the United States, nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended, resulting in poor health outcomes for women, their families, and communities across the country. Unintended pregnancy is directly linked to pre-term birth, low-birth weight, and maternal health complications. In fact, our nation has one of highest maternal and infant mortality rates among the world's most developed countries.

At Planned Parenthood, we are working toward a nation where unintended pregnancy rates are on the decline because all people have access to affordable birth control and other basic health care. We are committed to creating a world where teenagers are fully informed about how to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), are talking to their parents about it, and are planning their futures with opportunity and a sense of hope.

HHS' decision undermines this vision, which we believe the administration shares, and we want to discuss with you how to make birth control, including emergency contraception, more affordable and accessible for all.

Sincerely,

Cecile Richards

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