

## Access to Contraceptives

National Council of Jewish Women works to advance the well-being of women, children and families. NCJW believes that religious liberty and the separation of religion and state are constitutional principles that must be protected in order to maintain our democratic society.

NCJW endorses and resolves to work for:

- Comprehensive, confidential, accessible family planning and reproductive health services, regardless of age or ability to pay.
- Comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education programs in public schools.
- Quality, comprehensive, nondiscriminatory health care coverage and services, including mental health, that is affordable and accessible to all.
- The protection of every female's right to reproductive choices, including safe and legal abortion, medically accurate information and the elimination of obstacles that limit reproductive freedom. These rights are integrally bound to religious freedom – one of the cornerstones of our constitution. NCJW strongly believes that legislating from one religious point of this very personal issue restricts religious liberty for all of us.

## We urge the Legislature to:

**Support HB 58 (Burnam)**, which removes the restrictions on women's health program monies from going to abortion providers or affiliates of such providers.

- The current Texas Women's Health Program fails to provide adequate reproductive health care for women.
- Opting out of the federal program and establishing the Texas Women's Health Program resulted in a loss to the state of \$36M provided by the federal government for these services.
- Without the participation of Planned Parenthood, the remaining WHP providers are unable to deliver timely care to all women who need these services.
- The list of providers made available by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission is inaccurate and misleading. Many of the providers listed are not able to accept new patients, and many were not even aware that they were part of the program.
- Without enough healthcare providers, a woman's access to preventive health and family planning services is severely restricted and could lead to more unplanned pregnancies, risking women's health and economic security.

**Support SB 310 (Ellis)**, which requires human sexuality or family planning instruction to include age-appropriate, effective information with an emphasis on abstinence for young people and include the benefits of contraceptives. Giving young people the information they need to protect themselves when they do become sexually active is an important part of reducing rates of STIs and unintended pregnancies.

- Currently most Texas students receive ineffective and incomplete instruction about human sexuality. Our public school students need comprehensive, age-appropriate and medically effective sexuality education programs.
- Abstinence-only programs meeting federal funding criteria have been shown to be ineffective at stopping or delaying teen sexual activity. These programs DO NOT reduce the rates of teen pregnancies or STI's.
- Texas ranks third in the nation in teen pregnancy and first in teen "repeat" pregnancies.
- Armed with knowledge and access to contraception, unintended pregnancies will decrease.

**Oppose SB 521 (Paxton) and HB 1057 (Leach)**, which prevent an entity or individual that performs abortion or is an affiliate of one from providing human sexuality or family planning instruction or materials in a public school and requires written consent from the student's parent or guardian before the student can receive this instruction for someone other than a school district employee. If the instruction and material adhere to State Board of Education approved content and the school district believes the individual has the necessary skills to present the material, there is no reason to disqualify a person presenting the material on the basis of his/her employer. Additionally, if a parent does not have to opt-in when a school district employee presents the class, they should not have to opt-in when a school district approved person presents the class.

**Oppose HB 649 (Stickland)**, which would authorize a business tax refund or credit for a company that is fined by the federal government for refusing, because of the owner's religious convictions, to comply with the federal Affordable Care Act requirement to make emergency contraception available to employees as part of its business health benefit plan.

- Emergency contraception is a safe, effective back-up method of birth control that can prevent pregnancy in cases of contraceptive failure or unprotected sex.
- This bill creates an incentive for businesses to deny women access to birth control.
- This bill would subsidize the practice of allowing business owners to impose their personal religious beliefs on their workers, dictating the private health care decisions of their employees.
- This bill would put taxpayers in the position of encouraging businesses to flaunt federal law, and the taxpayer would have to assume the financial obligations for fines imposed.
- These business tax refunds or credit would adversely impact state funds.