



To: House Health Care Committee
From: Falko Schilling, Esq. VPIRG Consumer and Environmental Advocate
Date: 3/10/16
Re: H.620 An act relating to health insurance and Medicaid coverage for contraceptives

VPIRG is the state's largest nonprofit consumer and environmental advocacy organization with more than 40,000 members and supporters across Vermont. One of VPIRG's core missions is to help provide access to high quality affordable health care to all Vermonters. H.620 will increase access to contraceptive services and reduce Vermont's rate of unintended pregnancies.

Approximately 54% of pregnancies in Vermont are planned, falling short of our goal of 65% set by Healthy Vermont 2020.ⁱ We support H.620 and believe that it presents a path forward to reach the goals we have set as a state.

The ACA greatly expanded access to family planning tools for millions of Americans. Passage of H.620 will provide consistency and predictability regarding access to these services regardless of any potential change in the federal law. Codifying the birth control benefit will allow Vermonters to choose a form of contraceptive that is right for them, which will help drive down Vermont's rate of unintended pregnancies. We also support the provisions in H.620 that expand the birth control benefit to include vasectomies. This would bring men's contraceptive insurance coverage in line with the benefits granted to women, and give Vermonters greater access to the form of contraceptive that makes sense for them. A vasectomy is among the most effective contraceptive methods available, and among the most cost effective.ⁱⁱ

VPIRG also supports the provisions of the bill that would give women the ability to receive a full year's prescription of oral contraceptives. For oral contraceptives to be effective at preventing unintended pregnancy, consistency is essential. Allowing women a year supply of oral contraceptives will reduce the barriers that make them less effective. Recent studies show that dispensing a 1-year supply of contraceptives is associated with a 30% reduction in the likelihood of an unplanned pregnancy.ⁱⁱⁱ

Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs) are the most effective reversible methods of preventing unplanned pregnancies. We support efforts to align our value based payment system to remove financial hurdles between women and access to the birth control method of their choice. A value base payment for the insertion and removal of LARCs brings parity to LARCs and oral contraceptives, reflecting the higher efficacy rate of LARCs in reducing unintended pregnancies and the correlating impact of decreased unintended pregnancy costs to the state.

We thank the committee for taking the time to consider these important issues and would be happy to answer any questions regarding our support of H.620.

ⁱ http://healthvermont.gov/hv2020/documents/hv2020_healthy_lifetime.pdf

ⁱⁱ http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/pdf/contraceptive_methods_508.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Foster D, Parvataneni R, de Bocanegra H, Lewis C, Bradsberry M, Darney P. Number of oral contraceptive pill packages dispensed, method continuation, and costs. *Obstet Gynecol* 2006; 108:1107-14