

Marisa Marcath
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Subject: HB5436 Pharmacists Prescribing Birth Control and
HB5435 Insurance Coverage of this Service

March 4, 2024

Dear Chair Rogers and the Health Policy Committee Members,

I am writing to urge your support of these policies that will enable women to acquire affordable and easily accessible birth control medications from competent community pharmacists. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 43% of pregnancies are unintended,¹ generating a cost to the system of \$21 billion dollars (2010).² That's almost 1 out of 2 pregnancies. Among these pregnancies, it is estimated that college students have the highest rate of unintended pregnancies³. As a pharmacy student, an unintended pregnancy would greatly impact my ability to complete my doctoral degree. Long-term, a pregnancy now would affect my health, my baby's health, and my ability to be financially secure.

A simple solution is to make responsible and safe sex options easily available to college students like me, especially to those of us with no primary care provider, insurance, or living far from our local health care providers. Pharmacists are well-qualified to prescribe oral, patch, and ring birth control and are essential for public health initiatives such as Healthy People 2030's goals to decrease unintended pregnancies to 36.5% and increase birth control use.¹ We already saw during COVID pharmacists' importance that included authorizing birth control refills for people who could not reach their primary care provider. Plus 29 states and Washington DC already allow their community pharmacists to prescribe birth control.⁴ So what we are asking for has already been implemented and found to be successful. In fact, Oregon's community pharmacists who prescribe birth control since 2015, have been shown to decrease unintended pregnancies and save the government money from health care costs for the mother and baby from avoided pregnancies.⁵

I would like to go to my pharmacy to obtain birth control now. Nearly 30% of U.S. women of childbearing age have reported difficulty obtaining or refilling birth control prescriptions. Michigan college age students feel this service would prevent an unintended pregnancy.⁶ Michigan Republican (79%) and Democrat (73%) college students support pharmacists prescribing birth control.

Please vote in favor of HB5435 and HB5436. Thank you for continuing to work hard to improve the health, health care access, and wellbeing of Michiganders. If you need additional information, please contact me or Mary Beth O'Connell, PharmD at mboconnell28@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Marisa Marcath, PharmD Candidate 2026

References:

1. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/family-planning>
2. <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/public-costs-unintended-pregnancies-and-role-public-insurance-programs-paying-pregnancy>
3. NEJM 2016,374, 843–852
4. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/get-birth-control-from-pharmacists-states-map-rcna93146>
5. Obstet Gynecol 19;133:1238-46.
6. Pharmacy 20;8:99. doi:10.3390/pharmacy8020099