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Op-Ed

ACCESS DENIED: Birth Control for Women - Can we fix this?

Have you ever had difficulty getting access to birth control? Does it feel like your access to basic methods of birth control is limited? If you answered yes, then you are being denied of your right as a woman to prevent unwanted pregnancy and engage in a healthy sex life. In fact, *everyone* should have the right to engage in a healthy sex life. Unfortunately, women specifically, and literally, carry the burden when sexual activity, whether consensual or non-consensual, results in unwanted pregnancy. When this happens, women are forced to make the difficult decision to either keep or abort the fetus and seek out clinics that offer abortions if they chose to abort, which are even more limited than access to birth control. The lack of federal funding for contraception in even its most basic forms is the reason why women are finding it so difficult to obtain birth control in the United States and it's taking its toll on women's physical and mental health.

Women are constantly being denied birth control because they cannot afford it and cannot find any clinics that offer it for free. While the country has improved sexual education, helping women to become aware of ways to prevent unwanted pregnancy, it has failed them by not offering such methods in certain parts of the country and denying them when they cannot afford those methods. There is also limited birth control coverage for birth control included in most health care plans provided by employers because there currently is not enough funding for it. This has resulted in women either traveling hundreds of miles to find clinics, such as Planned Parenthood, that offer it at no cost or simply not bothering to use it at all. This dilemma is finely illustrated in a recent article titled "Birth Control is Transformative" where women shared their experiences with access to contraception. For instance, one woman, when asked if the costs of certain methods and visits to providers influenced her decision not to use it, her response was "Absolutely [the cost of birth control has affected my decision about whether to use it]. The copay, the actual pill, going in every three months, taking time off work, paying for gas...It's too much. At those times, I had to rely on abstinence." This woman is fully insured, yet access to birth control still comes at a cost and is highly inconvenient. Other women in the article report having similar issues and therefore choosing to avoid using contraception, putting them at risk of unwanted pregnancy. Some women, who are fully insured as well, even prefer to visit

Planned Parenthood because it is the only place that offers it for free. But in busy cities, it can be difficult to get an appointment and supplies run out when there is not enough funding.

Unfortunately, another recent issue has arisen; in addition to the limited access to birth control, health care plans that once covered birth control are no longer required to be provided by employers, thanks to our president. The Trump Administration has implemented a “new rule to eliminate the Affordable Care Act’s requirement that all insurance plans must cover birth control without a co-pay or otherwise ensure access to birth control coverage for women whose employers or schools can legally opt out of providing coverage” that “direct aim at birth control coverage for 62 million women” as stated by Planned Parenthood in an article. This sets women’s rights in the United States back in terms of the progress that we have made over the decades and could, in turn, lead to further national digression as the Trump Administration either removes or implements policies.

This means it is time to take action: we all need to call on U.S. Representatives and Senators to advocate for further federal funding to Planned Parenthood, the clinic that most women in the country have become so dependent on, in order to make birth control more accessible to women. The Trump Administration aims to cut funding for its services, but we must do everything in our power to prevent that from happening. Planned Parenthood heavily relies on federal funding and donations to supply contraceptive methods and right now, it unfortunately does not have enough funding to provide for everyone, especially the additional 62 million women who may not have access to birth control through their insurance in the future. Federal funding to Planned Parenthood is the only solution to this problem, so it’s time we start writing letters to our state senators and local politicians. We should never be denied the right to decide whether or not we want to engage in sexual activity or the right to decide when or if we want to have children.

Works Cited

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