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**Contraceptive Equity Key to Workplace Equity and to Ensuring Access to Basic Care**  
*Legislation Needed in Wisconsin to Improve Women's Health and Save Money*

Madison – Midway through National Women's Health Week, the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) highlights contraceptive equity as a key women's health issue that saves money. Wisconsin remains as one of the twenty-three states that still don't require insurance policies to cover prescription contraceptives if they cover other prescription drugs.

"Access to contraceptives is critical to achieving healthy families, both in medical and economic terms, said WAWH Director Sara Finger. "With women paying 68% more than men do in out-of-pocket health care costs and much of these costs are for reproductive health care, contraceptive equity is also a workplace equity issue."

In general, state contraceptive equity laws provides that a health insurance policy that is issued in that state and that provides coverage for prescription drugs generally, must provide coverage for any prescription drug or device that has been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use as a contraceptive.

In 2000, the National Business Group on Health estimated that failing to provide contraceptive coverage could cost an employer 15-17% more than providing it. And according to a 2001 Officer of the Commissioner of Insurance study of Wisconsin's largest insurers, only 33% of the 40 largest private health insurance plans cover a comprehensive range of prescription contraceptives.

"Contraceptives can be expensive, and without insurance coverage, many women are forced to either forgo using contraceptives completely or to use less effective methods," notes Finger. "Policies that allow insurance plans to exclude contraception contribute to the U.S.'s high unintended pregnancy rates and the cycle of poverty that plagues primarily women and children."

In 2000, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission said that the 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act prevents employers from discriminating against women who want to control their fertility. Based on this decision, all employers who provide prescription drug benefits and have more than 15 employees are subject to this ruling, yet enforcement of the rules depends largely on voluntary compliance.

"Considering most women spend approximately 30 years trying to post-pone or avoid pregnancy and ninety-eight percent of women use at least one kind of contraceptive method during this time, contraceptive equity in Wisconsin is key to ensuring women have access and coverage to the unintended pregnancy prevention care they need and deserve," concludes Finger.

To learn more about contraceptive equity, link to our [Contraceptive Equity Coalition](#) information page.

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*The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.  
To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: [www.supportwomenshealth.org](http://www.supportwomenshealth.org)*