



March 15, 2017

Dear Chair Greenlick, Co-Chairs, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the state and local chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Oregon, we write today to express our strong support for the Reproductive Health Equity Act (HB 3391). We know that access to reproductive health care is fundamental to a person's health and economic well being, and we support HB 3391 because it establishes comprehensive coverage for the full spectrum of reproductive health services — including family planning, abortion and postpartum care — for all Oregonians, regardless of income, citizenship status, gender identity or type of insurance.

**Women still face barriers to affordable birth control.** In Oregon, 18,600 women of reproductive age don't have coverage for critical preventive health services, including contraception. These women are enrolled in plans that were in place before the Affordable Care Act that aren't mandated to offer the same benefits otherwise required under the ACA. Many women are left struggling to pay for birth control out-of-pocket at a time when they need it most.

**High deductible plans are a serious pocketbook issue.** At least 43,000 women of reproductive age in Oregon have policies with deductibles of \$2,500 or more. This is particularly problematic for women seeking abortion — a time-sensitive and critical service that 1 in 3 women access by the time they are 45. While most plans cover abortion, the cost must first come out of this deductible, leaving the procedure unaffordable and inaccessible for many.

**Transgender and gender-nonconforming people are often denied coverage.** These Oregonians need access to services often categorized as "women's" health care, including cancer screenings and the full range of reproductive health services. Unfortunately, when coverage is dependent on one's gender marker on an insurance card, transgender and gender-nonconforming people can be denied access to necessary and life-saving care.

**Immigrant women face legal barriers to accessing the coverage they need.** 48,000 women of reproductive age in Oregon are categorically denied health coverage due to their citizenship status and are prohibited from purchasing insurance with their own money on the Exchange.. These women have coverage that ends immediately after labor and delivery, leaving them without care during the postpartum period, a pivotal time for both mom and baby.

Restrictions on reproductive health care can have profoundly harmful effects on public health, particularly for those who already face significant barriers to receiving high-quality care. This legislation ensures that all Oregonians are able to decide if and when they have children based on what's best for them and their family's circumstances.

NOW chapters in Oregon support HB 3391 because we know that Oregonians need access to full reproductive health coverage for all families to thrive, for a stronger economy and for a healthier state. We hope that you will join us in support of the Reproductive Health Equity Act.

Sincerely,

*Lisa Frack for the Oregon state chapter of the National Organization for Women (Oregon NOW)*

*Sheila Swinford for Central Oregon Coast NOW*

*Bud Feules for Greater Portland NOW*

*TeriAnn Mason for High Desert NOW*

*Laurie Notaro for South Willamette Valley NOW*