

## Access to Women's Health Services and Medically Accurate, Age Appropriate Sex Education

The National Council of Jewish Women works to advance the well being of women, children, and families. We endorse and resolve to work for:

- Comprehensive, confidential, accessible family planning and reproductive health services, regardless of age or ability to pay.
- Comprehensive human sexuality education programs in public schools.
- Quality, comprehensive, nondiscriminatory health care coverage and services that are affordable and accessible for all.
- The protection of every female's right to reproductive choices, including safe and legal abortion, and the elimination of obstacles that limit reproductive freedoms.

### “Education Works!” – Comprehensive Sex Education

- **NCJW SUPPORTS House Bill 741 (Castro)/Senate Bill 515 (Ellis).** “Education Works!” is a bill that requires schools to provide a comprehensive sex education program that includes abstinence but also provides complete, medically accurate information about sexually transmitted infections (STI) and the health benefits and risks of contraception. In addition, the bill includes strategies that encourage young people to develop healthy communication with their parents and peers and helps build other life skills such as goal setting and responsible decision-making.
- Texas currently has one of the highest teen pregnancy and teen birth rates in the nation.
- Abstinence-only programs are not the solution. These programs have been proven ineffective at reducing teen sexual activity. They do not reduce the rates of teen pregnancies or STIs.
- Some research shows that students who go through abstinence-only programs are less likely to use contraception or condoms when they do become sexually active.
- Responsible, complete, and medically accurate sexuality education programs that discuss the benefits of abstinence or using condoms and contraception have been proven to be more effective at preventing teen pregnancies and STIs, and instill behaviors in young people that can help protect their health for years to come.
- Abstinence-only programs have no effect in reducing teen sexual activity or number of partners. However, medically accurate comprehensive sexuality education helps delay the initiation and reduce the frequency of sexual activity in young people and increases the use of contraception and condoms.
- The vast majority of American parents (82%) support comprehensive sexuality education that teaches both abstinence and other methods of preventing STIs and pregnancy.

### “Prevention Works!” – Family Planning

- **NCJW SUPPORTS** House Bill \_\_\_/ Senate Bill \_\_\_ “Prevention Works!” is a family planning initiative that will increase access to preventative family planning services and education programs for eligible low-income women.

- This legislation aims to reduce unintended pregnancies; prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and to overall improve women’s health.
- Provides basic preventive services like well-woman exams, screenings for breast and cervical cancer, contraception, and screenings for STDs.
- Expands access to vital health services to detect and treat manageable conditions before they become more dangerous and more expensive to treat. This policy saves taxpayer money and helps alleviate the growing pressure on public health services due to the recent economic downturn and increasing unemployment.
- According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, for every \$1 spent on family planning, \$3 is saved in Medicaid cost for prenatal care, delivery, and first year infant care. Medicaid currently pays for more than half of all births in Texas.

### **Mandating Misinformed Consent**

- **NCJW OPPOSES House Bill 36 (Corte)/Senate Bill B182 (Patrick)** which stipulates that a woman must review an ultrasound image at least two hours before an abortion can be performed, even in situations of fetal abnormality, incest, rape or to preserve the woman’s health. This legislation would place additional administrative burdens on physicians and staff who already must provide patients with required information at least 24 hours before an abortion.

### **Unnecessary Regulation of Emergency Contraception**

**NCJW OPPOSES House Bill 44 (Corte)** which would mandate that pharmacists inform women orally and in writing that emergency contraception (EC) may prevent implantation or fertilization but leaves out that EC can also prevent ovulation from occurring in the first place. In addition, the bill would require pharmacies to display a foot-and-a-half by two foot sign by each register in the establishment that reads: *“If you believe that life begins at fertilization—the point where the sperm and egg unite—then you need to know that emergency contraception may either function as a contraceptive to prevent the egg and sperm from uniting or prevent the implantation of your already fertilized egg in your womb. The pharmacist dispensing this drug is required to explain to you how the product may help to prevent your pregnancy.”*

- Emergency Contraception (EC) consists of the same hormones found in daily birth control pills. When taken up to five days after unprotected intercourse, it can help prevent an unintended pregnancy. EC will not terminate an already established pregnancy.
- HB44 does nothing to improve women’s health. Its sole purpose is to dissuade women from requesting EC and pharmacies from providing it.
- This requirement is an invasion of privacy. Requiring women to sign for EC and for pharmacists to keep these records would essentially create a registry of women who have purchased the contraceptive.
  - The woman would be required to show a driver’s license, sign and date the purchase and sign that the information was provided. Pharmacies would be required to keep this information for two years.

2/09

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