

# BIRTH CONTROL: WE ALL BENEFIT

## 50 States, 50 Stories

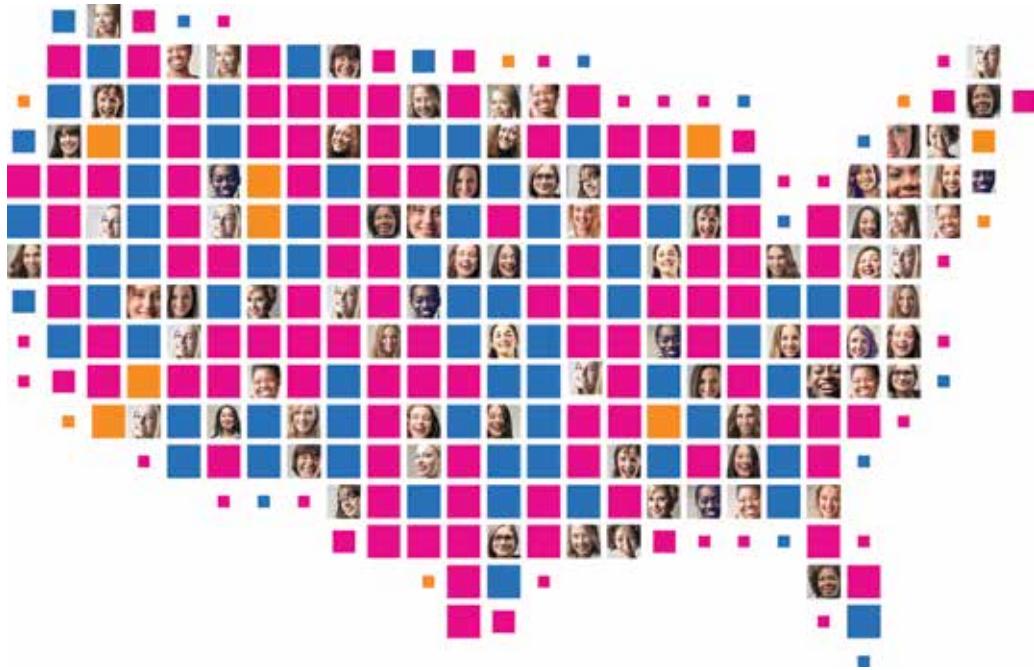


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# BIRTH CONTROL: WE ALL BENEFIT

## 50 States, 50 Stories

These inspiring stories of women from across the United States—from Anchorage, Alaska, to Salina, Kansas, to Panama City Beach, Florida—demonstrate that birth control is a fundamental part of women’s lives. It is basic preventive health care that nearly every woman needs to manage and plan her life and that of her family.

It is unbelievable that in 2014, we face an ongoing fight over access to birth control in this country. Yet that is the situation we now find ourselves in: fighting to save women’s access to birth control. Politicians, special interest groups, and even employers are actively trying to make it harder for women to get birth control as part of their broader effort to restrict women’s access to health care and limit women’s rights. This fight is not just about birth control but about the rights of women to manage their own lives, their economic security, and their medical well-being.

Under the birth control benefit of the Affordable Care Act, women have access to contraceptives at no out-of-pocket cost. The recommendation to include the birth control benefit in the ACA came from the nonpartisan Institute of Medicine, reflecting the consensus among those in the medical and scientific communities that access to birth control is common preventive care for women.

The majority of Americans support the birth control benefit and want it to be kept intact. In fact, polling shows that seven in 10 Americans believe that health insurance companies should be required to cover the full cost of birth control—just as they do for other preventive services. Already, 27 million women take advantage of the women's health preventive benefit, including birth control. As more women sign up for health care under the Affordable Care Act, we expect millions more to get the benefit once their coverage begins. **In fact, 99 percent of sexually active American women between the ages of 15 and 44 have used birth control at some point.**

With the birth control benefit, America is now experiencing the single greatest advancement in women's health in a generation. It may seem like an obvious point, but it bears repeating: Birth control reduces unintended pregnancy—enabling women to plan their families and manage their lives.

Many people do not realize, however, that women also use birth control for a host of other non-contraceptive reasons. Nearly 60 percent of women who use the birth control pill use it to manage health conditions such as endometriosis and migraines. Contraception also plays a significant role in reducing the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancers.

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### **The Positive Impact on Women's Lives**



Take better care  
of themselves



Support  
themselves  
financially



Complete  
education



Keep or get  
a job

Birth control is not just a health issue; it's also an economic issue. Simply put, birth control expands opportunities for women. According to a 2012 report from the Guttmacher Institute, women use birth control to better achieve their life goals, with the majority of women reporting that contraception has had a significant impact on their lives. They say it allows them to take better care of themselves (63 percent), support themselves financially (56 percent), complete their education (51 percent), and/or keep or get a job (50 percent).

The current attacks on birth control have a real impact on millions of women's lives and economic futures because birth control is expensive. For example, birth control pills typically cost between \$15 and \$50 a month. Some women can't take the pill, and their health care provider may counsel them to use the IUD, for instance. But insertion of an IUD can cost \$500 to \$1,000 in up-front costs, which is prohibitive for many women.

For women struggling to make ends meet, the birth control benefit makes a huge difference. It can save women hundreds of dollars a year. A 2010 survey found that over a third of female voters have struggled to afford prescription birth control at some point; as a result, they have used birth control inconsistently. As we all know, inconsistent birth control use can lead to unintended pregnancy.

## **Planned Parenthood provides birth control to millions of women each year.**

Our focus is on making sure they can get the birth control they need. That's why we fought so hard for the birth control benefit in the first place, and that's why we are continuing this fight—and not giving up until we win. The choice about whether or not to use birth control—or any form of basic health care—should be between a woman and her doctor, not a woman and her politician or her boss.





### Kime M., Anchorage, AK

"As a woman in my mid-twenties, having access to birth control means that I can focus on getting my master's and starting my career, so that I can give back to my community and support my family—when I'm ready to have one."



### Ashley B., Huntsville, AL

"Birth control empowered me to be responsible for my own reproductive health, take charge of my future, and become a contributing member of society."



### Kendall G., Rogers, AR

"For the first time in my life I was able to afford birth control on my own because my insurance finally covers it."



### Gail B., Tempe, AZ

"Without birth control, I could not have worked to help my husband through school and I could not have pursued higher education and a law degree for myself. We planned to have two children and have been able to help them achieve the life they want. More children would have prevented our family from living up to its potential."



### Kinsley B., San Francisco, CA

"I am a mom of three, working full time AND parenting full time. It is exhausting and kids are EXPENSIVE! I love my kids but I cannot have any more due to finances and the well-being of both my career and mental health! Birth control is vital not only to younger women who want to get their careers in place before they start having kids but also to older women who really need to just take care of the kids they already have!"



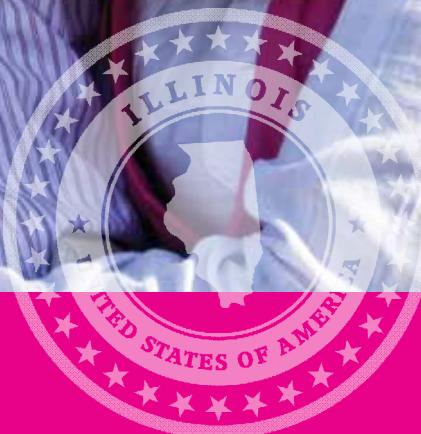
### Patricia E., Denver, CO

"As a single woman who teaches part-time, I have to pay for my own insurance. Birth control coverage is necessary for me because I am trying to plan for the future and cannot afford any surprises right now. I also support birth control coverage without copays because I see my students struggling as single parents. No one should risk their financial future (or the future of their children) because they lack affordable prevention."



## Endometriosis

- A health condition that can cause chronic pain and, in some cases, infertility
- Affects more than five million women in the U.S.
- Women with severe pain may use hormonal medications, including hormonal birth control, to alleviate the symptoms



## Courtney E. 32, Chicago, IL

"My son is three, and his little sister just had her first birthday. They are the biggest blessings of my life—and they're here because of Planned Parenthood. All through graduate school, Planned Parenthood provided me with birth control to help control my endometriosis, a condition that otherwise could have left me infertile."

## **Michelle G., Hartford, CT**

“Ovarian cysts are painful and impair fertility. Without regular access to birth control (which I get thanks to Planned Parenthood), I would continue to have these cysts. There are a variety of medical reasons that people choose a hormonal contraceptive. Regardless, every woman should be able to choose for herself.”



## **Michelle L., Washington, DC**

“As a 20-something with a part-time job, this will be one less thing for me to worry about being able to afford. Thanks!”



## **Becky P., Wilmington, DE**

“Many women, including me, use birth control for medical reasons such as endometriosis, bleeding disorders, polycystic ovary syndrome, irregular or painful periods. Whatever reason a woman chooses to use birth control, she should be able to get it at no cost.”

## **Ivy B., Panama City Beach, FL**

“Before the ACA, my insurance company considered OB/GYNs to be specialists; therefore, the copay was high and lab work was not covered. Additionally, I paid \$60 a month for my birth control. Last week, I saw my doctor for my annual exam and had no copay or lab bill. Yesterday I picked up the first of my new annual prescription and paid nothing! This will save me around \$900 a year, which is significant for a young, married professional.”



## **Dameon T., Atlanta, GA**

“When the time comes I would like it to be available and affordable for my daughter through whatever health insurance provider we are on.”



## **Angelina K., Kailua, HI**

“Part of taking responsibility for ourselves and our families is to have children when we are ready and able to care for them. Preventing unwanted pregnancies helps everyone. What would our society be like if all children were wanted and well-cared for? My son was planned and it made such a difference. My choice, my responsibility.”

## **Rebekah R.**

### **37, Calimesa, CA**

"I always had two major dreams in life: one was to be a mom, and the other was to graduate from college. I wanted to be able to do both of those things, but also knew the timing was important. I wanted to finish college and then have a child. Planned Parenthood really helped me accomplish that."

"Women, and by extension, their families, really can't be prosperous or healthy unless they have reproductive health care and the capacity to choose when and whether to have children. Planned Parenthood provided me the tools to have the career and the family I wanted. You need examinations, birth control, access to health care, and you need to be empowered to make those choices, and that's what Planned Parenthood helped me do. I didn't have to choose between my career aspirations and being a mom because I was able to time my life so I could pursue both. I know that it's so much harder for young women who have kids before they're ready."

"Planned Parenthood helped me achieve my goals. I had my son with my then-husband just 10 days after graduation. I then went on to earn my master's degree from Harvard and to begin my political career working for the U.S. Congress."



## **Chenoa E., 34, Dallas, TX**

"Before the Texas Women's Health Program was defunded, I went to Planned Parenthood for an IUD. But it fell out a few years ago when I didn't have insurance. Now I'm insured under the ACA and I'm back at Planned Parenthood, so I can afford to get my IUD reinserted."

"I prefer the IUD method because it offers the perfect combination of being long-lasting, effective, and hormone-free. Most of all I love the convenience that the IUD offers. I enjoy not having to worry about a daily birth control routine, or return visits to update my birth control method."

I think it's pretty awesome that a single Planned Parenthood visit for an IUD insertion will provide several years of reliable and stress-free birth control."



### **T The IUD**

- Small, "T-shaped" device inserted into the uterus to prevent pregnancy
- Effective and long-lasting

- Must be inserted by a health care provider
- Costs between \$500 and \$1,000 up front, but lasts up to 12 years

## **Sara B., 21, Hartford, CT**

"I still remember the day, over a year ago, when I got my first birth control prescription for free at the student health center on campus. I felt relieved—it was one less expense that I needed to stress about. It was like a weight was lifted off my chest and I'm forever grateful for that. In fact, I think I almost hugged my doctor."

"I'm a full-time student at Trinity College and, thanks to financial aid, I'm one of the first women in my family to go to college. I take women's studies courses and my major is psychology. My dream is to go back to Jamaica, Queens, where I was born and raised, and get an internship at a local community health center. I know there are a lot of battered women in my neighborhood and I want to be able to help them."

"The Affordable Care Act's preventive benefit that requires my insurance company to cover the full cost of my birth control, without a copay, means I can spend more time concentrating on my studies and less time stressing about how I'll pay for my next prescription."





### **Jane S., Colo, IA**

"As a self-employed business owner, I don't want to have to worry about an unplanned pregnancy. Every little bit helps with expenses!!"

### **Madeline G., Boise, ID**

"I'm a poor college student who's learning to do a whole lot of good in this world! But I cannot do that if I can't plan parenthood."



### **Michelle K., Savoy, IL**

"Copay-free birth control allows me to save money monthly and put it toward other necessities! I have a high-deductible health plan that is very costly in and of itself. Paying an additional copay on top of my monthly rate would make birth control unaffordable. Birth control is a priority in my life as I am a working young professional who is not in a place financially where I could afford a child. I rely on my birth control for health purposes as well!"



### **Michelle F., Crown Point, IN**

"Without birth control, I would have probably become pregnant at an early age, with an unwanted child, and no career. Because of Planned Parenthood and birth control, I was able to become a nurse and have a great family when I was ready!"



### **Abbey R., Salina, KS**

"Birth control made it possible for my husband and me to complete medical school and residency and have our two children at a time in our lives when we were ready for them. We were lucky to be able to afford birth control at the time; not everyone is. The ACA improves access and allows more women and families to have the ability to plan their family as we were able to."



### **Elizabeth S., Inez, KY**

"As a college student who uses contraceptives for hormone therapy, coverage without copay means that I can spend money on school instead of medication."





### Kate L., New Orleans, LA

"Birth control has made it possible to work as much as I do and live the quality of life that I choose for myself. I am so thankful for it and Planned Parenthood."



### Eleni H., Brookline, MA

"I used birth control to combat tremendous pain in my twenties. Had I not been covered, I would have been unable to afford this medication and my quality of life would have decreased—as every month I would have faced debilitating pain. My copays at the time, though relatively small, were still a struggle to meet every month on a student's income. I support birth control coverage without copays for women like myself in need of financial and medical assistance, and I support it because I believe the health and maintenance of a woman's body is essential to a functioning society."



### Joanna L., New Market, MD

"Birth control is expensive, plain and simple. I was unemployed for a length of time due to the poor economy and struggled to find the \$30/month to pay for the generic. I now work two jobs that don't offer health insurance and still struggle to find the \$30 each month to pay, but I do it because

I am responsible. I don't want to become pregnant, and I deserve the benefit for being responsible—as should any and every woman."



### Sarah D., Windham, ME

"For me, and for many women like me, this is not only a reproductive issue; it's a basic health issue. Before going on birth control to regulate my cycle, I became desperately ill every month with headaches, nausea, and fainting. Birth control makes it possible for me to remain healthy and function in my everyday life, and I need health care coverage that makes it available and affordable."



### Maggie K., Lansing, MI

"I work full-time and attend grad school. I have student loans to pay off. It is very important to my husband and me (both Catholic) to have access to birth control so that we can carefully plan for our future family. I also have a chronic illness and deal with daily pain issues. Birth control helps to make my cycle easier to handle with my existing condition."

**Linda L.**  
**39, Panama City, FL**



"After my annual well-woman exam a couple of months ago, I pulled out my wallet at the receptionist's desk—and she told me to put it away. Because of the Affordable Care Act, sometimes called "Obamacare," my insurance plan changed and began covering preventive care without a copay. Regular checkups are free now.

"Afterward, when I went to the pharmacy to refill my birth control prescription, just like I have for the last 13 years, I was in for another surprise: it was free, too. I used to pay \$40 out of pocket each month (and that's with insurance), but thanks to the Affordable Care Act, I no longer have a copay.

"I first started taking birth control when I was dating the man who would become my husband. I was 25 and in college full-time, working toward what would eventually become a master's and then a Ph.D. I can't fathom the difficult decisions my husband and I would have to make if we were faced with an unplanned pregnancy, then or now. Deciding if and when to get pregnant is one of the most important decisions a woman can make, and our options shouldn't depend on how much money we have.

"Especially during those earlier years while I was putting myself through school, the costs associated with my birth control prescription were hard to manage. Even today, my prescription came to about \$500 a year before the benefits of the Affordable Care Act kicked in for me."



## Birth Control Shot

- A shot in the arm that prevents pregnancy
- Effective and convenient
- Easy to get with a prescription
- Lasts for three months
- Costs \$35–\$100 per injection, plus any exam fees



**Cristina G.**  
**36, Dallas-Fort Worth, TX**

"Because of a pre-existing ovarian condition, I am unable to use most forms of birth control. The birth control shot is my only option for birth control and also for pain relief. The nurse at Planned Parenthood who administers the shot is wonderful. It never hurt when she administered it, and to make me feel more comfortable we would talk about our children and how they were doing. It's meaningful that she remembered my daughter's name."



### Lori J., Eden Prairie, MN

"My OB-GYN has prescribed birth control pills for me, a woman nearly 52 years of age, as part of my treatment for perimenopausal symptoms. It is highly unlikely that I would become pregnant at my age, but it is still physically possible. I appreciate the fact that I have access to birth control for both reasons. And the last time I picked up my prescription, it was absolutely free of charge!"



### Rocky P., Kansas City, MO

"Birth control is extremely important to my overall health. Birth control allows me to function by regulating my hormones; without it, I am literally unable to leave the bed. It is crucial that I have the ability to plan my life and function as I see fit; there is no alternative."



### Maude C., Sumner, MS

"These pills are very expensive for people who are on a budget and also going to school. Birth control should be accessible and affordable."



### Aurora W., Kalispell, MT

"I'm a struggling post-college freelance designer. My income fluctuates, and I often don't have an extra \$45 for a copay if there's an emergency or I'm going through a dry spell financially. I'm not ready to be a parent. When I get to the point at which I can amply support myself and my business is steady, I may consider a family."



### Joey F., Chapel Hill, NC

"When I was in my twenties, I put birth control on my credit card because I couldn't afford to pay my bills, feed myself and stay on birth control on my minimum wage income. It took years to pay off the debt I racked up. I don't want to see a younger generation of women have to make those kinds of decisions just because they're trying to be responsible and healthy."



### Rachael G., Fargo, ND

"I've seen girls at my school who have become pregnant because they didn't have birth control. I've also seen girls who have prevented pregnancy and gone on to accomplish their dreams because of birth control."



### **Jessica M., Lincoln, NE**

"When I was a high school student, even before I became sexually active, birth control pills helped me and many of my friends who suffered debilitating cramps and mood swings. Today birth control helps me plan for a future I can afford, without unplanned pregnancies, which, as an unemployed graduate student, would derail my academic and financial future."



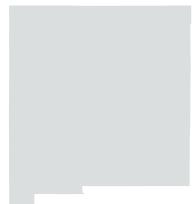
### **Mollie F., Newmarket, NH**

"As a woman in her early thirties in graduate school, I have gone on hormonal birth control for the first time with the ACA. An unintended pregnancy now would be devastating to me; I would have to choose between school and a child, and that is a choice that would undo me. I am so grateful that my birth control is affordable and accessible. I will be happy to have a professional degree and be employable when I start my family!"



### **Ariel H., Ridgewood, NJ**

"I'm 23 and recently became married to the love of my life. We both have piles of student loans and other bills to pay, and every penny counts. I'm so relieved to not have to worry about the possibility of getting pregnant with a child I can't support."



### **Katy H., Albuquerque, NM**

"As a college student who works full-time at a low-paying job, I don't have a lot of money, nor do I have the time to raise a child right now. I was on the pill for over a year because it was the only affordable option under my health care plan. The IUD, which I had wanted from the beginning, was barely covered, and would have cost me several hundred dollars out of pocket, which I didn't have. The ACA finally gave me the option to get my IUD and get off of hormones. Thanks to the ACA, I have my emotional health back and can use the birth control method that's best for me."



### **Samantha T., Reno, NV**

"Before the Affordable Care Act, my IUD cost \$600 for the copay—which was completely out of my price range. But now I do not have to pay anything at all, and my husband and I don't have to worry that an unplanned pregnancy will hold us back from graduating college next spring."

## **Shireen N. 19, Fremont, CA**

"I first started using birth control because I learned the benefits of it through volunteering at Planned Parenthood. Later that year, I applied for TAKE CHARGE (a joint state/federally funded program administered by Washington State providing family planning services to women and men who do not have insurance, or whose insurance coverage does not fully cover their contraception). TAKE CHARGE was a fantastic program that allowed me to obtain birth control because I wasn't comfortable asking for my family to pay for it, and I knew that use of birth control was critical once I started having sex. People can obtain birth control through their doctor's office or through other clinics, but the key reason I went through Planned Parenthood is that it was accessible and affordable for me.

"Birth control has changed my life; it has allowed me to attend college, travel, work as an intern for various organizations, and progress in society as a working, driven woman. Birth control has helped me to live the life I want—and that result should be celebrated, not reprimanded. To this day, I am a patient at Planned Parenthood and I plan on keeping it that way!"

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Estimated number  
of unintended  
pregnancies averted  
by Planned Parenthood  
contraceptive services  
each year:

**515,000.**





**Jaclyn M.**  
**26, New York, NY**

"One of the perks of my new ACA insurance is that now I'm getting birth control for free (meaning I don't have to pay a copay). I'm one of the many American women who need the birth control pill for pain relief. Without it, the pain of my endometriosis is intolerable."





### **Christopher B., New York, NY**

“My girlfriend and I are both public school teachers. Birth control means that we can be better teachers now and better parents later.”



### **Kay C., Columbus, OH**

“It is already saving me money. I will save \$120/year on copays, and this savings would have been a huge help to me when I had no insurance. I don't make a lot of money as a graduate student taking care of four people on one person's paycheck, so anything helps.”



### **Lisa P., Oklahoma City, OK**

“I am so grateful that President Obama sees the vital importance of proper health care for women, including increased access to affordable birth control. This change is significant for me in that I will now save \$120 a year. When you make \$35,000 a year, that makes a difference.”



### **Anna S., Portland, OR**

“In 2007 I had a \$300 copay for my birth control device. This year when I had it replaced, it was fully covered. Since it is a regular fact of life that I have to periodically replace it—like getting vaccines and other regular preventive health procedures—this makes all kinds of sense.”



### **Kara C., Philadelphia, PA**

“I am a young woman who is happily married to my college sweetheart. I'm so proud that we live in a country where we can take charge of planning our family, and that I'm afforded the opportunity to work toward building my career and enjoy time with my husband before having children. As recent college grads, we

don't have a lot of money, and measures like the ACA ensure that I can continue to take charge of my future!”



### **Nancy D., Wakefield, RI**

“I know adults in their twenties living on their own who cannot afford the food on their table at times, and they are wisely waiting to have children when they are more financially able to afford them.”

## **Jesse M., Cayce, SC**

"Without birth control, I'd never be able to get through college. Also, it does more than prevent unwanted pregnancies. Without it, every month I would spend one entire week in severe pain. This not only regulates my period but helps me function in my everyday life."



## **Sarah H., Rapid City, SD**

"I am a young adult. All of my friends are young, mature, responsible adults. We are all committed to the use and promotion of birth control because we are all mature and responsible enough to know that we are not ready to have children. We are also not the richest people, and buying our preferred method of birth control can sometimes be a financial hardship, even with copays and assistance programs. We want control over our futures, and in this world where almost nothing is in our control, at the very least we want to control if and when we start a family."



## **Elaine S., Knoxville, TN**

"I'm 29, and I've been on birth control pills since I was 17, when I started developing ovarian cysts. I now have endometriosis. If I'm even 12 hours late taking my pill, I experience a lot of pain, and the pill may even be preventing me from needing surgery. Even with insurance I had been paying \$400 a year for them. When my pharmacist told me I was now paying \$0, I was surprised and thrilled! It's nice to get a break."



## **Jean Marie D., Plano, TX**

"I still have substantial student loan debts, and not having to pay for birth control is a relief. I also have multiple health issues and must take some medications that include steep copays. I was raised Catholic. I believe that in a perfect world there would be no unwanted pregnancies. Access to birth control for all women is a decisive step in that direction."



## **Shelly S., Salt Lake City, UT**

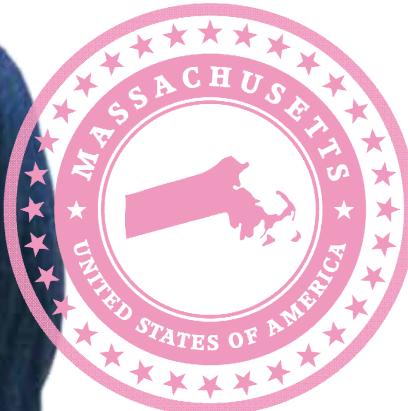
"I am a graduate student who is working on a Ph.D. in cancer biology. I receive a small stipend and poor health insurance. However, with the Affordable Care Act, now I am able to get birth control. Thanks to birth control, I am able to continue my schooling and further our knowledge about cancer formation."

## **Chris M.**

### **31, Estes Park, CO**

"I suffer from endometriosis. Every three months, I go to a Planned Parenthood health center and get a Depo-Provera shot. Even with a shot, I still experience pain, but without it, I wouldn't be able to function, go to work, or even tolerate the symptoms."





## Kanisha H. 20, Boston, MA

"When I was 16, I decided to go to Planned Parenthood and learn about birth control options for a medical reason—I had horrible, painful periods for 10 days each month, and I didn't know how to deal with them. The Planned Parenthood doctor was great and provided counseling about all the different options that were available to me. Being a teenager you never really have adults ask what you want in your life, so that was really refreshing to see at Planned Parenthood. I started on the pill and then the Depo-Provera shot, and then I wound up getting an IUD."



Many women are not sure if their menstrual cycle is normal. Be sure to talk to your health care provider if:

- you bleed much longer or more heavily than usual
- you have severe pain before or during menstruation
- you have unusual bleeding between periods
- your periods or PMS keeps you from doing what you usually do

Staff at your local Planned Parenthood health center or another health care provider can talk with you about any concerns you may have about menstruation.



### **Karen F., Bealeton, VA**

"When I was a military wife, I had free medical care with birth control when I needed it. We had the two children we wanted and could care for WHEN we wanted them and felt we could afford them. I didn't think about the privilege at the time; it was just there when I needed it. Now I think: how absurd that all women don't have this vital medical coverage available to them!"

### **Casey P., Burlington, VT**

"At least two of my close friends and I have recently begun to get our birth control for free, after years of having to pay increasingly unaffordable copays. It lessens our financial, physical, and mental stresses knowing that our preferred method of contraception is affordable and easily attainable. Now we can put more money toward paying off our student debt."



### **Jessica W., Shoreline, WA**

"I have been on birth control pills for the past nine years to treat extreme menstrual pain. Since the ACA, I haven't had to worry about copays for receiving my birth control every month. And this has made my life much easier. Birth control

is not just used for preventing pregnancy; sometimes women need it to treat a variety of health problems."



### **Stacey H., Milwaukee, WI**

"I am a student trying to finish up my bachelor's degree. I do not have the time or the extra money to have children right now. Birth control with no copays allows me to better plan when I am ready to start a family and also greatly reduces any unexpected, unwanted surprises like pregnancy."



### **Kathryn C., Princeton, WV**

"I am on birth control for a medical reason. Presently, my birth control is the most expensive prescription I have to take, and it worries me that I might have to choose between a medicine I need for my health and other things I need like food, gas, and rent."



### **Abbie B., Jackson, WY**

"I am an unmarried 35-year-old woman in a wonderful relationship. I do not want to have children. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, I do not need to pay \$98/month for the form of birth control I choose."



Act. No matter what.

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**Planned Parenthood Action Fund**