

9/26/2024

Dear Chair Hertel, Majority Vice Chair Santana, Minority Vice Chair Webber, and members of the committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my commentary about SB 974 and SB 973. My name is Julia, and I am a second-year law student. I plan to pursue a career in reproductive rights law to help protect vulnerable patients and providers.

I would like to share a short anecdote concerning the importance of accessible contraceptives in my own life. In fall 2023, I co-founded an organization, East Lansing Free Emergency Contraceptives (EL Free EC). This grassroots organization provides community members in the East Lansing and Greater Lansing communities with free safe sex products. These products include dental dams, internal condoms, external condoms, pregnancy tests, and most notably, over-the-counter emergency contraceptives like Plan B. To accommodate needs outside of business hours, EL Free EC offers services past 5:00 p.m. and on weekends. In total, we have distributed over 1,600 emergency contraceptives saving community members over \$80,000.

Personally, I was very fortunate that I had the opportunity with relative ease to access birth control; however, this is not the case for many of my fellow student peers. Throughout my time as a student reproductive rights advocate at MSU, I have spoken to many students about the barriers to accessing contraceptives. Students encounter unique barriers to contraceptives. For example, they struggle with the costs of contraceptives, they lack transportation, and the added stigma associated with reproductive healthcare resources.

SB 974 and SB 973 would be critical for students who experience cost barriers to accessing emergency contraceptives. The average cost of an over-the-counter emergency contraceptive in Michigan ranges from \$50 to \$65. Fifty dollars could be someone's utility payment for the month, it could be their weekly grocery budget, and this high fee is burdensome for many Michiganders. This legislation helps to mitigate the logistical burdens and can help offset costs for those with fewer resources.

Students should be able to make the decision that is best for their own sexual and reproductive healthcare. Challenging barriers to contraceptives is critical for students to make and exercise informed, independent decisions about their bodies and reproduction. This legislation is a key step towards broadening access to healthcare across our state.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Julia Walters