

Durbin Joins Group of 38 Democratic Senators in Call to Protect Women's Access to Contraceptive Coverage

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Senators Say Affordable Care Act Balances Need to Ensure Women's Access to Birth Control with Employers' Religious Freedom

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined a group of 38 Democratic Senators calling on the Obama Administration to protect women's access to affordable birth control under the *Affordable Care Act* (ACA). In a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the senators argue that when Congress passed the

ACA it clearly intended to provide contraceptive coverage to women and families, and that the current accommodation policy appropriately guarantees women access to that coverage while protecting religious freedom.

In May, the U.S. Supreme Court failed to resolve the case of *Zubik v. Burwell*, yet another attempt by some employers to interfere with women's access to health care by denying insurance coverage for birth control. The case was sent back down to the lower courts, and over the summer, the Obama Administration has been asking for public comments about how best to ensure that women have access to affordable birth control while protecting employers' rights to religious freedom.

“As Members of Congress and strong supporters of efforts to increase access to affordable birth control, we believe that the legislative history of the ACA makes clear that the law's contraceptive coverage benefit, and the current accommodation, advance Congress's goal of promoting public health and equality for women,” the senators wrote to HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell

The ACA requires health insurance plans to cover the full range of FDA-approved birth control methods, without any out-of-pocket costs, and millions of women are already benefiting from this provision. Churches and other houses of worship are exempt from the requirement, and the law also allows some employers who have cited religious objections to “opt-out” of offering health insurance plans that cover contraception. In the case of *Zubik v. Burwell*, employers challenged the ACA's birth control policy in court, arguing that even this “opt-out” process violates their religious beliefs.

Full text of the letter is available [here](#).