



The League of Women Voters

A Voice For Citizens, A Force For Change

c/o P.O. Box 90079, Anchorage, AK 99509-0079

February 16, 2016

Dear Senator Stedman, HSS Chair:

The League of Women Voters of Alaska strongly supports SB 156, a bill related to insurance coverage for contraceptives and other services that reduce the risk of unintended pregnancies. At the national level, the League of Women Voters of the United States supports primary care for all, care that includes "prenatal and reproductive health" (*Impact on Issues* 72). When women have the consistent ability to plan their pregnancies, their families benefit through greater financial well-being, healthier living conditions, healthier children, greater opportunities, and a myriad of additional benefits.

While improving the quality of life for families, the ability to avoid unintended pregnancies also reduces costs for state and federal governments. In 2010 according to the Guttmacher Institute, the State of Alaska spent nearly \$43 million on health costs related to unintended pregnancies while the federal government added another \$71 million for a total cost of \$114 million. Guttmacher reports that 48% of all pregnancies in Alaska in 2010 were unplanned and 64% of Alaska's unplanned pregnancies were publicly funded, representing the \$43 million cost.

In addition, the cost benefits of supporting women in their efforts to plan their pregnancies goes far beyond the cost of the pregnancy itself. A woman who is able to plan a pregnancy can better guarantee that her health is at optimum level prior to pregnancy, reducing the risk of a difficult pregnancy and trauma to the child. Such planning reduces the possibility of increased health problems for the child, problems which can follow the child for years and require increased health and education costs for the State. A planned pregnancy increases a woman's ability to manage her role as income provider for a family and allows that family the best opportunity to remain as financially independent as possible. Supporting affordable contraceptives prescribed on a 12-month basis will undoubtedly reduce the number of unintended pregnancies in Alaska, thereby increasing family well-being and reducing State costs.

SB 156 can assist women and families to plan pregnancies so they are ready for the added responsibility of a child. In addition, costs to the State for unintended pregnancies can be reduced. This is a win-win bill that deserves consideration by the Legislature especially as it struggles with the budget crisis. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Hetty Barthel, Secretary
League of Women Voters of Alaska

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.