



**State Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan  
Ohio House District 58**

Health Committee  
September 10, 2019  
Sponsor Testimony HB 184

Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Manning and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today on House Bill (HB) 184, the Prevention First Act. The Prevention First Act will improve the overall health and wellbeing of Ohio women. This legislation creates comprehensive sexual health and sexually transmitted infection education in schools, provides certain hospital and pregnancy prevention services for victims of sexual assault, and provides coverage for prescription contraceptive drugs and devices.

The Guttmacher Institute found that 55% of pregnancies in Ohio are unintended, with 25% of these unintended pregnancies ending in abortion.<sup>1</sup> Additional research demonstrates that unintended birth mothers receive less early prenatal care, are more likely to have a low birthweight, and breastfeed less compared to planned births.<sup>2</sup> Birth control allows for greater family planning by decreasing the number of unintended pregnancies. By increasing access to birth control, we can decrease Ohio's infant mortality and abortion rates.

Ohio stresses abstinence-only education while not mandating that their students' sex education classes be medically accurate or include information on other forms of contraception.<sup>3</sup> The *National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy* reports that Ohio currently has the 28<sup>th</sup> highest teen pregnancy rate in the country.<sup>4</sup> This suggests our current education methods are not as effective as other states. Comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-unintended-pregnancy-ohio>

<sup>2</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13524-014-0359-9>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>

<sup>4</sup> The Ohio Story and Ohio Data

<https://thenationalcampaign.org/data/state/ohio>

sexual health education in school, and access to birth control, are critical to reducing Ohio's teen pregnancy rates.

This change to our educational approach is popular. Nearly two-thirds of Ohio parents agree that the best approach to sexual health education for high school students is to focus on both abstinence as well as the value of contraceptive use.<sup>5</sup> This legislation gives Ohio families what they are asking for.

The Prevention First Act will educate Ohioans about pregnancy prevention by establishing the *Teen Pregnancy Prevention Task Force*. This task force will be comprised of the following:

- the Director of Health or the Director's designee
- the Superintendent of Public Instruction or the Superintendent's designee
- two members of the House of Representatives (one appointed by the Speaker and one appointed by the Minority Leader)
- two members of the Senate (one appointed by the President and one appointed by the Minority Leader)
- one member of the Commission on Minority Health
- two teens who reside in Ohio, appointed by the director of health
- two parents who reside in Ohio and are parents of teens who reside in Ohio, appointed by the director of health
- two teachers who reside in Ohio and are employed as classroom teachers in Ohio, appointed by the director of health
- One representative from **each** of the following, appointed by the director of health:
  - a community-based organization that provide teen pregnancy prevention services
  - public health professionals
  - licensed medical practitioners
  - school nurses

The legislation will require the Ohio Department of Health to post medically accurate information on its website. These informational materials, created by the Ohio Department of Health about emergency contraception, will educate medical professionals, social service providers and the public on how to use emergency contraception, how it works and how it can help prevent unintended pregnancy following contraceptive failure, contraceptive non-use or sexual assault.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.odh.ohio.gov/-/media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/chss/adolescent-health/literaturereview.pdf?la=en>

The Prevention First Act also requires hospitals to have basic standard of care policies for victims seeking help in the emergency room. This includes policies for providing victims with information on and actual emergency contraception use upon request. It does not require an individual doctor to provide emergency conception if doing so violates their personal religious beliefs; hospitals will adjust their policies if this scenario occurs.

Similarly, pharmacies must have a policy maintaining patients' right to access their birth control prescription while not violating their personal religious beliefs. They will be required to dispense in-stock prescription and over-the-counter birth control without judgment or delay. All insurance plans in the state of Ohio covering other prescription medications must cover birth control medications and devices.

The Prevention First Act provides comprehensive education to the public on the best methods to reduce sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies in Ohio. Thorough education on how to prevent unintended pregnancy and better access to birth control we will reduce the consequences of unintended pregnancies and make our state a healthier place for women, children and families.

Thank you for your consideration. We would be happy to take questions at this time.