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***THIS WEEK: 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PLAN B OTC DECISION***

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***Despite gains, most vulnerable populations still face barriers to access***

**Oakland, CA** – It’s been one year since the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decision to allow over-the-counter (OTC) sales of Plan B emergency contraception (EC) to consumers 18 and older. Although the decision marks a milestone in the fight to make Plan B an OTC product, equal access for many women remains elusive. Young women and women without proof of age must still obtain a prescription to get Plan B.

Over the last year, policymakers, women’s health advocates and healthcare providers nationwide have pushed to ensure broad access to all women, regardless of age. Currently, pharmacists in the nine EC pharmacy access states (AK, CA, HI, MA, ME, NH, NM, WA, VT) continue to offer direct access to Plan B without requiring an advance prescription from a doctor or clinic. As of June 2007, eight states (HI, IL, MA, NJ, NY, OK, OR, WA) confirmed Medicaid coverage for Plan B OTC. Moreover, Barr Laboratories reported that Plan B annual sales are expected to double to \$80 million in this year alone.

Belle Taylor-McGhee, Executive Director of Pharmacy Access Partnership, a center of the Public Health Institute, says that barriers to access still remain. “The FDA decision left behind the most vulnerable populations: young women, low-income women and women without proof of age, which often includes undocumented women. Although unintended pregnancy rates are declining nationwide, we’re still not where we need to be. What we still lack is healthcare policy that supports women of all ages and backgrounds who may someday need EC,” Taylor-McGhee says. **An opinion-editorial on the FDA anniversary by Belle Taylor-McGhee will be featured on Thursday, August 23, 2007 at [www.rhrealitycheck.org](http://www.rhrealitycheck.org).**

Moving forward, Taylor-McGhee says Pharmacy Access Partnership remains committed to the following objectives:

- Lift the restrictions on OTC access to allow women of any age to get Plan B without a prescription
- Change state-level Medicaid laws to allow coverage for Plan B OTC
- Educate pharmacists on the benefits of EC and other contraceptive services
- Ensure fair reimbursement rates to pharmacies serving low-income clients
- Advocate for public funding for community education about EC, where to get it and how it works

**For more on the year since the FDA’s landmark decision, visit [www.pharmacyaccess.org](http://www.pharmacyaccess.org).**

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*Pharmacy Access Partnership was established in 1999 as a center of the independent, nonprofit Public Health Institute. Its purpose is to expand consumer access to contraceptive commodities and reproductive health services in pharmacies, and to give pharmacies a stronger role in promoting community health.*