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FDA DISMISSES SCIENCE AND DISREGARDS YOUNG WOMEN WITH PLAN B DECISION Teens Denied Access to Emergency Contraception Will Face More Pregnancies and Abortions

Albany (August 24, 2006)—Family Planning Advocates (FPA) decried the decision by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to deny young women over-the-counter access to Plan B emergency contraception (EC) to prevent unintended pregnancy. The FDA today released a long overdue decision to allow Plan B emergency contraception to be sold over-the-counter, but attached scientifically baseless restrictions that deny most teenagers enhanced access to this safe, effective method of backup birth control. While today's decision is a triumph for many women, young women who need emergency contraception will continue to encounter unnecessary barriers that can lead to unintended pregnancy.

"The FDA has taken one step forward and two steps backwards," said JoAnn Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. "Last year, the Bush Administration took a first step backwards by recommending that women under 16 be denied over-the-counter Plan B. This year, they retreated even further by raising that age limit to 18. The FDA's own scientific committees recommended that EC be available without any age restrictions."

"It is shameful that the FDA continues to put politics before science. In doing so it continues to put the lives of young women at risk," said Carol Love, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse Region.

The United States has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the developed world. Research shows that better access to proven prevention methods like accurate sex education and emergency birth control are the best ways to reduce the alarming rate of teen pregnancy in this country. Studies also confirm that over-the-counter access to emergency contraception does not increase or encourage sexual activity among teens.

"Today's decision proves, once again, that politics trumps science at the FDA when it comes to Plan B," said Reina Schiffrin, President/CEO Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic. "The scientifically baseless restriction imposed on younger women is deeply troubling. With the U.S. having one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the western world, the agency's decision to erect hurdles between teens and birth control is bad medicine and bad public policy."

Increased access to EC could prevent up to 1.5 million unintended pregnancies, and 800,000 abortions, each year. EC lowers the risk of pregnancy when started within 120 hours of unprotected intercourse. But the sooner EC is administered after unprotected intercourse, the better it works, making timely access critically important.

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