



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Krueger Calls Fda "Morning After" Move a "Half-Victory"; Calls Upon State Senate to Pass S.6686 Which Would Make Emergency Contraception Available for All Ages at New York Pharmacies

LIZ KRUEGER August 23, 2006

New York—Describing today's Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) move to make emergency contraception available over-the-counter to women over 18 as "a half-victory", New York State Senator Liz Krueger called upon the state Senate to review S.6686.

The morning-after pill, as emergency contraception is often called, will remain a prescription-only product for women under the age of 18. If passed, S.6686 would allow emergency contraception to be available to women of all ages in pharmacies across New York, under physician standing orders.

The bill has been passed in the Assembly as A.9906, but has been held up in the Senate.

"The FDA's move to make emergency contraception available over-the-counter without a doctor's prescription is sound, however, under this regulation women must now provide documentation of age. This is a serious invasion of privacy at a time when women need barrier-free access to medical services," Krueger said.

Emergency contraception is not an abortifacient and is most effective if taken within 12 hours of unprotected sex. It significantly lowers the risk of pregnancy when started within

120 hours.

Limiting access to women of any age will lead many pharmacies to place the product behind the counter, forcing women to wait in line, ask for the product and show identification as proof of age.

"Having an arbitrary age limit will reduce access and create a hurdle for women who are concerned about their privacy," Krueger declared.

Women under 18 have tens of thousands of unwanted pregnancies every year. "It is naïve to think that if there were no age restrictions there would be an increase in teen sexual activity. Limiting immediate access to emergency contraception results in these women facing the difficult decision as to whether to carry the unwanted pregnancy to term, or to terminate the pregnancy," Krueger said.

The New England Journal of Medicine reported that as many as half of all unwanted pregnancies may be prevented with unfettered access to emergency contraception, which does not interrupt, disrupt or harm already existing pregnancies, but instead prevents pregnancy before it has been established.

Krueger went on to say, "If the government were serious about reducing unintended pregnancies, they would follow the science and recognize that the medicine is equally as safe for those under the age of 18 as it is for those older. This sends the wrong message about the safety of this product. This is politics trumping science."

FDA studies indicate that there are no serious side effects associated with the use of emergency contraception.

Because of the medically unnecessary and burdensome prescription requirements, Senator Krueger says that the government "appears to be making a moral judgment which is not the role of the FDA."

"The last thing that we want is a situation where women do not feel comfortable going to their local pharmacy and getting emergency contraception," Krueger concluded. "The fact that the government is blocking women of any age from unfettered access is detrimental to their health and their futures."