



**Testimony in support of  
S.499/H.536 An Act relative to advancing contraception coverage  
and economic security in our state  
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Financial Services  
By Jessica Sullivan, LWVMA Women's Issues Specialist  
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts strongly supports S.499/H.536, An Act relative to advancing contraception coverage and economic security in our state, also known as *ACCESS*.

The Massachusetts League's strong belief in the freedom of reproductive choice dates back to the position adopted in 1972 supporting the "freedom of individuals to make informed reproductive decisions based on their own convictions and beliefs" that later was adopted by the League of Women Voters on a national level. To achieve this goal, the League supports an emphasis on preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies; access to family planning information, services and devices to people who want them; wide distribution of information about contraception and sterilization; and public funding for birth control and abortion services for low-income women.

Since the 1990s, the League at the national and state levels has promoted a comprehensive position supporting "a health care system that provides access to affordable, quality health care for all Americans and protects patients' rights." With the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), we were finally on our way to achieving that goal. For the past twenty years, the League has fought at every turn to make sure that local and national legislation increased access to necessary health services, including contraceptive products, services, and information.

The *ACCESS* bill offers the opportunity to ensure that the important elements of the ACA related to the availability of contraception remain law in Massachusetts regardless of the fate of the ACA at the federal level. The provisions of this bill can help safeguard the ability of the women and families of Massachusetts to receive safe, effective, and reliable contraceptive products and services, even if the ACA is repealed.

For the 1.4 million women in Massachusetts who currently access preventative health services without cost-sharing, protecting this access from the instability of federal legislation is a critical part of facilitating their optimal health and self-determination. Contraceptive products and services are the keystone of being able to plan for one's future educationally, professionally, and personally. Without access to affordable contraception, women are less able to pursue their educational or professional goals, space their pregnancies at healthy intervals, provide for the children they already have, and create the families of their choosing.

The League supports the *ACCESS* bill because of the social and financial benefits it provides to the women and families of Massachusetts. Returning to the days of \$50 monthly co-pays for birth control would be detrimental for many women and families in Massachusetts. A Kaiser Family Foundation [report](#) in October 2016 found that 63% of the decrease of out-of-pocket prescription drug costs from

2012-2014 was attributable to the elimination of cost-sharing for oral contraceptive pills. For women in Massachusetts, the average out-of-pocket spending per month for contraception decreased from \$16 in 2011 to \$1.73 in 2014 according to the [Health Policy Commission](#). These savings can be life-changing for women trying to proactively manage their health and fertility.

Massachusetts women and families deserve the security of affordable access to contraception regardless of any actions Congress may take, and the League urges the legislature to continue extending these benefits to the women and families who have come to depend on them.

We ask the Joint Committee on Financial Services to report S.499/H.536 favorably out of committee and work to assure its passage. Thank you for your consideration.