

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

July 21, 2011

INTERNET:  
[max@baucus.senate.gov](mailto:max@baucus.senate.gov)  
<http://baucus.senate.gov>

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

I write in regards to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's upcoming determination of which services should be considered preventive services and covered without cost-sharing under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). I urge the Department to strongly consider the recent recommendations by the non-partisan Institute of Medicine (IOM) to include contraceptive methods and family planning services within women's preventive services.

The ACA marks an important shift from a *sick care* system to a *health care* system that was long overdue. As part of that shift, the law requires the Department of Health and Human Services to identify preventive services that should be covered without cost sharing in order to ensure that coverage and cost are not barriers to improved health. Last year, the Department asked the Institute of Medicine to determine which preventive services should be considered based on their importance to women's overall health. On July 19, the Institute of Medicine recommended covering all forms of contraception in addition to coverage for other preventive services specific to women's health care needs.

Many women in Montana and across the country have faced prohibitive costs in accessing birth control methods. A recent study has shown that more than one-third of females struggled with the cost of prescription birth control at some point in their lives. As a result, women have been unable to use birth control consistently. Providing access to birth control and family planning care is essential to improving women's health overall and has shown to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies. Furthermore, many women rely on prescription contraceptive methods to control and manage other health problems.

As we strive to control costs, we must make prevention a priority. The IOM recommendations, based on peer-reviewed, scientific evidence, is a significant step in recognizing the importance of preventive services to ensure all women have access to health services to meet women's unique health needs. I urge the Department to and accept the recommendations of the IOM and include family planning and contraceptive methods as preventive services covered without cost sharing, as we continue to work to improve women's health and access to affordable care.

Sincerely,

