

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 21, 2003

The Honorable Tommy Thompson
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As Governor of Wisconsin and now as Secretary of Health and Human Services, you have earned a well-deserved reputation as a compassionate and innovative proponent of initiatives to help our fellow citizens who need help to lead better lives. Your historic welfare reform plan set the stage for nationwide transformation of the welfare system, and your extension of prenatal coverage to Medicaid recipients provides thousands of poor women with the care they need.

Under current law, adolescent girls are able to obtain contraceptive drugs and devices at school clinics and other facilities without their parents ever knowing their daughters have obtained potentially dangerous products. This imposes a serious risk to the health of countless young women across the country. That is why we are writing you today.

As you know, contraceptive use by young girls can be very damaging. Possible complications include blood clotting, bone deterioration, blindness and in some cases death for girls with heart conditions. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, one-third of all Title X recipients are teenagers.

At present, federal regulations applicable to Title X funding require confidentiality in the distribution of contraceptives to teenage girls. As a result, these regulations put young woman, whose parents or guardian are the most knowledgeable regarding her and her family's health history, at risk of serious injury or even death.

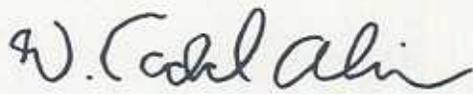
In 1998, a sixteen year old in Walton County, Georgia, unbeknownst to her parents, went to receive a pelvic exam and an injection of the contraceptive drug Depo Provera. Just prior to receiving the injection, the girl casually mentioned to the nurse that she had a heart murmur. The clinic indicated she would need a note from her doctor so that the clinic would be immune from a malpractice claim. Later, the family doctor told her mother that had she received the injection, her daughter could have gone into cardiac arrest and died.

Mr. Secretary, you have the power to help prevent future Walton County, Georgia, cases from occurring. Federal statute grants you the authority to exclude un-emancipated minors from receiving free contraceptive services by excluding them from the definition of "low-income

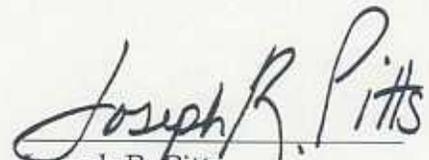
families." By changing that definition, you will not only be protecting the right of parents to safeguard the well being of their daughters. You will also be saving lives.

We call on you to clarify the current definition and prevent harm and exploitation from happening to America's teenage girls. Thank you for your serious consideration, and we look forward to working with you on this matter.

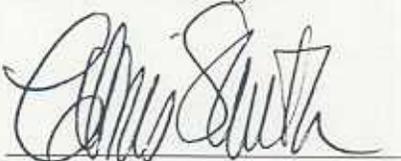
Sincerely,



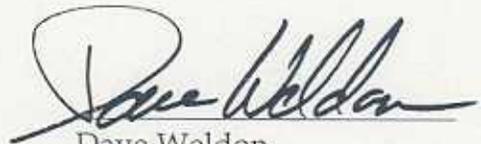
W. Todd Akin
Member of Congress



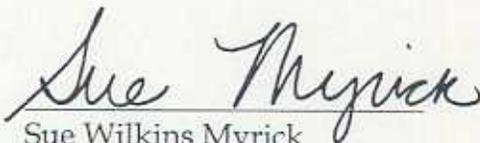
Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress



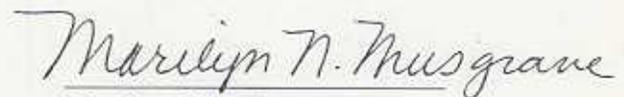
Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



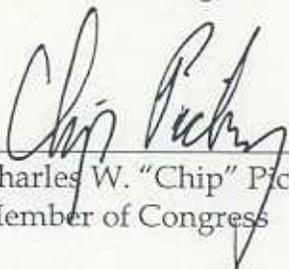
Dave Weldon
Member of Congress



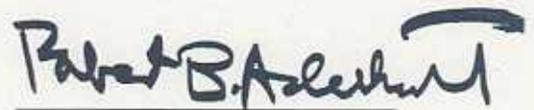
Sue Wilkins Myrick
Member of Congress



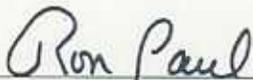
Marilyn N. Musgrave
Member of Congress



Charles W. "Chip" Pickering
Member of Congress



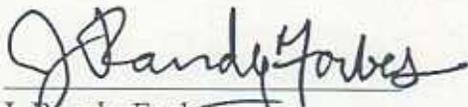
Robert B. Aderholdt
Member of Congress



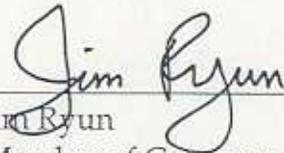
Ron Paul
Member of Congress



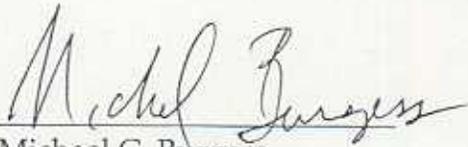
Roscoe G. Bartlett
Member of Congress



J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress



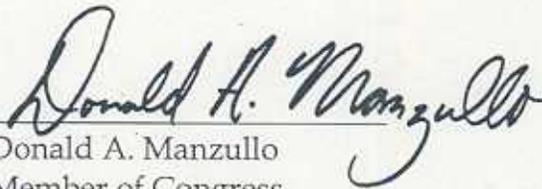
Jim Ryun
Member of Congress



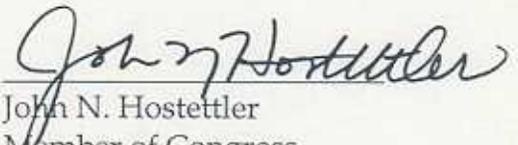
Michael C. Burgess
Member of Congress



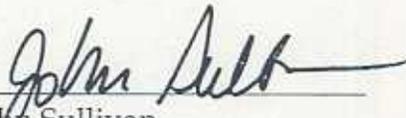
Ernest J. Istook, Jr.
Member of Congress



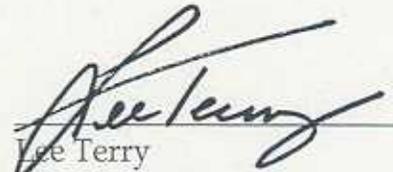
Donald A. Manzullo
Member of Congress



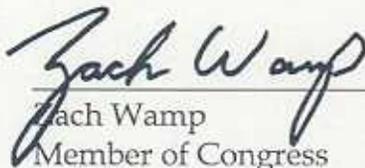
John N. Hostettler
Member of Congress



John Sullivan
Member of Congress



Lee Terry
Member of Congress



Zach Wamp
Member of Congress

Enclosure.