

For families just above the poverty level, the high cost of contraceptives can cause them to face a choice between groceries and family planning. This can lead to unplanned pregnancies, leaving struggling families -- or the state-- holding the bill for the skyrocketing cost of maternity care.

Senate Bill 74 aims to ease this burden. If passed, the state would apply for a waiver that would provide Medicaid coverage of contraceptives for those who are below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$3,500 per month for a couple). Covered contraceptive methods would include birth control pills, rings, and Intrauterine device (IUD) - but would not cover abortions. This extension of benefits to those just above the Medicaid expansion threshold would greatly benefit families who may have just climbed out of poverty, and those who may be struggling to stay out of a financial crisis. This family-focused, family-friendly legislation would help support mothers and not-ready-yet future mothers.

Access to contraceptives is especially important for low-income women that Sen. Kitchen is hoping to cover through this bill. Low-income women are often more at risk of unintended pregnancies due to a lack of resources and other barriers. We also know that these barriers become even more of a hurdle when you consider racial and social inequalities.

Family planning is an important part of creating overall better health outcomes. Unintended pregnancies can lead to a variety of [unintended consequences](#), such as increased rates of birth disabilities and low birth weights. Children from unintended pregnancies may be more likely to experience physical and mental health challenges during childhood. They may also experience lower educational attainment and more behavioral issues.

Family planning also supports [economic health](#) by enabling families to wait to have children until they are emotionally and financially prepared. The freedom to control the timing of pregnancy and the rate of family growth enables women to pursue higher education, grow within the workforce, and earn higher wages. By supporting bills like SB74 we would support women's ability to succeed.

Legislation like SB74 also has great economic benefits for the state. When access to contraception is expanded, states see an average [savings](#) of \$7 for every \$1 spent. Family planning is beneficial for parents, but also beneficial for the taxpayers' money. When families are not ready, they may need more assistance from the state. Medicaid covered 68% of unplanned U.S. births, and the cost of covering maternity care under Medicaid, versus covering contraceptives, makes it clear that there is significant cost savings for Utah in this bill.

Having a child should be a choice that women and families are allowed to make deliberately for themselves based on their physical, emotional, and financial readiness. The Senate Health and Human Services committee voted in favor of SB74, and if the rest of the legislature wants to save money and support stronger families and healthier babies, they will do the same.