

# Free the Pill

Dr. Robert M. Califf  
c/o U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
10903 New Hampshire Ave  
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

March 17, 2023

Dear Dr. Califf:

Last year, members of the Free the Pill coalition (formerly the Oral Contraceptives Over-the-Counter Working Group) wrote to congratulate you on your new appointment as FDA Commissioner and to emphasize the importance of your leadership in ensuring a timely and science-based review of expected applications for bringing oral contraceptives over the counter.

Today, seven months after HRA Pharma announced its submission to the FDA of the first-ever Rx-to-OTC switch application for a progestin-only oral contraceptive pill, we are writing to express our frustration and disappointment at the FDA's postponement of the advisory committee meeting to discuss this application as well as the lack of information that has been shared about next steps. The FDA announced the postponement of this meeting on October 26, 2022, and now, more than four months later, we have yet to receive any further communication as to when a new date will be set. The FDA must prioritize reviewing the first-ever application for an OTC birth control pill and announce a new date for the advisory committee meeting as soon as possible.

As leaders within the reproductive health, rights, and justice movements, we know that increasing access to contraception is essential to addressing health equity and reproductive justice challenges facing our communities. Due to pervasive and systemic inequities, significant barriers to contraceptive access remain – especially for Black, Latinx, AAPI, and Indigenous peoples, people who live in rural areas, those working to make ends meet, immigrants, LGBTQ+ folks, and young people. Addressing these barriers is an urgent public health priority, especially in light of the ongoing attacks on reproductive health care across the country.

Removing the prescription requirement for birth control pills is a safe and science-based way of increasing access to contraception. [Decades of research](#) affirm the safety and effectiveness of oral contraceptives, and health care providers and major medical organizations such as [The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) and the [American Academy of Family Physicians](#) have voiced their support for over-the-counter birth control pills for people of all ages. There is also broad public support: [77% of women](#) of reproductive age are in favor of making birth control available without a prescription, and over 170 reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, parents, young people, providers, and researchers have signed on to our [statement of purpose](#).

Given the proven safety and effectiveness of oral contraceptives, coupled with the urgency of this need, the delay of the advisory committee meeting for this application is frustrating and deeply disappointing.

As the Commissioner of this Agency, we request that you do everything you can to immediately set a date for the advisory committee meeting and ensure a timely and evidence-based decision that reflects the decades of safe use and research and the broad public health benefit.

Undersigned by members of the Free the Pill coalition.

**Free the Pill Coalition Steering Committee Members**

Kelly Blanchard, President, Ibis Reproductive Health  
Don Downing, BS Pharm. R.Ph., Clinical Professor, Univ. of WA School of Pharmacy  
Daniel Grossman, MD, Director, Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH)  
Debra Hauser, MPH, President, Advocates for Youth  
Carmen Leibrock, Development Manager, Cobalt  
Raegan McDonald-Mosley, MD, MPH, FACOG, CEO Power to Decide  
Lauren Schenk, Youth Member, Advocates for Youth  
Belle Taylor-McGhee, Reproductive Justice/Reproductive Health Advocate and Writer  
Krishna Upadhyaya, MD, MPH, Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Britt Wahlin, Vice President for Development and Public Affairs, Ibis Reproductive Health  
Lin-Fan Wang, MD, MPH, Physician

**Free the Pill Coalition Organization Members**

AAPI Youth Rising  
Advocates for Youth  
All Families Healthcare  
All-Options  
American Society for Emergency Contraception  
Black Women for Wellness  
Black Women's Health Imperative  
Bold Futures NM  
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Centering Equity, Race, and Cultural Literacy in Family Planning (CERCL-FP)  
Collective Energy for Nurturing Training in Reproductive and Sexual Health (CENTRS Health)  
Contraceptive Access Initiative  
Doctors for America, Health Justice & Equity Impact Area  
Essential Access Health  
Equity Experience  
Ibis Reproductive Health  
Indigenous Women Rising  
Ipas  
Jacobs Institute of Women's Health  
Legal Voice  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Health Law Program  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice  
National Organization for Women  
9to5  
North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology  
Northwest Health Law Advocates (NoHLA)

NY Birth Control Access Project  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Power to Decide  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Reproaction  
Reproductive Health Access Project  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society of Family Planning  
Upstream USA  
Women's Health Research Team  
Woodhull Freedom Foundation

**Free the Pill Coalition Individual Members**

Samantha Baer, MD, ScM, OB/GYN, Clinician  
Brenna Bernardino, MPH, Independent Researcher  
Jenn French, Esq.  
Richard A. Grossman, MD, MPH  
Cynthia Harper, PhD, Professor, University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine  
Kathleen Hill Besinque, PharmD, MEd, FASHP, FCPHA  
Cheryl A. Johnson, RN, BS, Public Health Nurse  
Sarah Lynch, Clinical Associate Professor, Binghamton University School of Pharmacy  
Anu Manchikanti Gomez, PhD, Associate Professor, University of California, Berkeley  
Megan Masten, MD  
Jennifer McIntosh, PharmD, MHS  
Kaitlin McKernan, Medical Student  
Victoria Nichols, MPH, Free the Pill Project Director, Ibis Reproductive Health  
Kathryn Phillips, PhD, Professor, University of California, San Francisco  
Heather Munro Prescott, PhD, Professor Emerita, Central Connecticut State University  
Susan Rubin, MD, MPH

*Individuals listing their organizational affiliation is for informational purposes only*

**Additional Supporters**

Cobalt  
Ealena Callender, MD, MPH, FACOG  
Equity Experience  
March for Moms  
Susan M. Seibold-Simpson, PhD, MPH, RN, FNP  
Aisha Wagner, MD  
Megan Williams, MPH, CHES, PhD Candidate