



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 9, 2011

## HHS Secretary Nixes Plan to Allow Minors to Purchase Abortion Pill

Wendy Wright of [Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute](#) explained that Plan B is really an abortion pill because it stops the implantation of a fertilized egg. "It changes the lining of the uterus so that an embryo can't implant — or if an embryo is implanted, it can't survive," she explained. "So it really should be labeled an abortion drug."



President Obama, who was behind the override, "said ... it was just common sense to keep girls under the age of 17 from being able to buy a morning-after contraceptive pill off a drugstore shelf," reported AP.

"Citing his own two daughters, Obama said: 'I think most parents would probably feel the same way.'"

Pro-abortion groups most decidedly, did not, however. "When President Obama took office, he pledged the administration's commitment to scientific integrity," said Cynthia Pearson of the [National Women's Health Network](#). "This decision is a betrayal of that promise."

Nancy Northrup of the pro-abortion [Center for Reproductive Rights](#) complained: "When it comes to FDA drug approvals, contraceptives are being held to a different and non-scientific standard — in a word, politics."

During a news conference, Mr. Obama explained what he said was his take on the issue: "I will say this, as the father of two young daughters. I think it is important for us to make sure that ... we apply some common sense to various rules when it comes to over-the-counter medicine." He added that "when it comes to 12-year-olds or 13-year-olds, the question is: Can we have confidence that they would potentially use Plan B properly?"

As reported by AP: "Obama said that as he understood it, Sebelius was wary of a 10-year-old or 11-year-old going into a drugstore and buying a medication — one on the shelves next to 'the bubble gum and batteries' — that could be harmful if not used properly."

Plan B proponents, however, said the analogy was silly, since the pill would not be shelved with candy or batteries, but next to condoms and other contraceptives. Dr. Cora Breuner of the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), which had approved of selling the abortion pill to minors, pointed out that at about \$50 per pill, "no 11-year-old or 12-year-old is going to have that kind of money anyway."

According to [Bloomberg News](#), FDA chief Margaret Hamburg had been prepared "to approve sales of Plan B One-Step without a prescription to women of all ages based on 'science-based evidence.' The FDA said it was the first time HHS has overruled an agency approval."



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In a [memo to Hamburg](#) informing her of her decision to override the FDA, Sebelius wrote: "It is commonly understood that there are significant cognitive and behavioral differences between older adolescent girls and the youngest girls of reproductive age, which I believe are relevant to making this determination as to non-prescription availability of this product for all ages."

Pro-life and pro-family leaders expressed their relief at Sebelius' decision, noting that Plan B, also known as the "morning after" pill, is dangerous both to unborn babies, as well as to the women who take the pill. In addition, noted [Baptist Press News](#), allowing minors to buy the pill "would undermine parental oversight and set minors up for exploitation by adult sexual predators."

Richard Land, president of the [Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission](#), said he applauded "Secretary Sebelius for her wisdom in protecting girls 16 and under from the unprescribed usage of Plan B One-step. If this had gone on the open shelves, we would have begun to see young girls appearing in emergency rooms hemorrhaging."

Jeanne Monahan of the [Family Research Council](#) said the decision was the right one on several fronts. "The average age of a girl who is sexually trafficked in the U.S. is 13 to 14," Monahan said. "There is a real danger that Plan B could be given to young women, especially sexually abused minors, under coercion or without their consent. Interaction with medical professionals is a major screening and defense mechanism for victims of sexual abuse." She added that "women of all ages have the right to know how this drug may act in their bodies and on their newly developing babies."

Some observers, noting Sebelius' cozy relationship with Planned Parenthood and her pro-abortion stance over the years, had a cynical take on her decision. Representative Michael Burgess (R-Texas), who had opposed the plan to approve Plan B for sale to minors, said he was pleased with Sebelius' decision, but thought it smacked of politics. "It's a presidential election year," Burgess told Bloomberg News. "This is a striking departure from where congressional Democrats and the administration have been in the past."

The National Women's Health Network's Cynthia Pearson agreed. "What else can this be but politics?" she said in anger. "It's not science. It's not medicine. It's not women's health."

[LifeSiteNews.com](#) noted that many pro-life leaders shared the suspicion that the move by Sebelius, "whose record both as Kansas governor and HHS Secretary has staunchly favored the family planning industry, may have been politically calculated." The pro-life website recalled that the Obama Administration had "shocked U.S. bishops and other Catholic leaders this summer by announcing plans to force nearly all private insurers to cover even abortifacient birth control such as Plan B without co-pay, including many church-run organizations."

Father Shenan Boquet, president of [Human Life International](#), told LifeSiteNews that his group remained "very concerned" about the administration's commitment to a birth control mandate. "If this decision by Secretary Sebelius is truly about protecting the health of young women, then she will reconsider the HHS rule forcing private insurers and employers to pay for services to which they are diametrically opposed," said Boquet. "But if this move is intended as a pragmatic one to alleviate concerns of those, such as the Catholic bishops, who are rightly concerned with her department's activist promotion of contraception, then it will fail in its objective. The mandate must be reversed, and soon."

*Photo: HHS Sec. Kathleen Sebelius*



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