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National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Statement on FDA Decision About Emergency Contraception

(Washington, DC) — In response to a decision by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rejecting over-the-counter sales of the emergency contraceptive Plan B®, Sarah Brown, Director of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy issued the following statement:

“There is good reason to believe that sexually active teenagers in particular would benefit from wider availability of emergency contraception (EC), which over-the-counter status provides. Because teen sex is so often unplanned, nearly 80 percent of teen pregnancies are unintended. Given that so many teen pregnancies are unplanned, that 20 percent of teens have sex before turning 15, and that more than 60 percent of teens in high school have sex by the time they graduate, the National Campaign believes that teens will be helped by making emergency contraception more accessible. It’s also important to recognize that making EC easily available is not inconsistent with a strong message to young teens especially that abstinence from sex their best option.

Our reading of the FDA decision suggests that the door is still open for progress on over-the-counter status for EC—albeit with a most unfortunate delay. It may well be possible for Barr Pharmaceuticals, Inc. to obtain approval for women age 16 and older to obtain emergency contraction relatively soon; and with additional data in hand, Barr might also be able to extend this important benefit to those under age 16. We urge the FDA to make EC available over-the-counter to women of all ages, which was the overwhelming recommendation of the FDA’s Joint Committee.”

About the National Campaign: Founded in 1996, the National Campaign is a private, nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families by reducing teen pregnancy. The organization's goal is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third between 1996 and 2005.

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