

Free the Pill

Patrick Lockwood-Taylor, CEO and Senior Leadership Team at Perrigo
c/o Perrigo Co Plc
430 Monroe Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

January 31, 2024

Dear Senior Leadership team at Perrigo:

We are writing to you today as leaders within the reproductive health, rights, and justice movements and members of the [Free the Pill coalition's steering committee](#) to call for Perrigo to do everything in their power to ensure a retail price of no more than \$15 for a three-month supply of Opill when it becomes available on the market later this year. We also urge Perrigo to implement a robust and accessible consumer assistance program for those who cannot afford to pay that price.

We appreciate the important work that Perrigo has done to expand access to a groundbreaking reproductive health product and their commitment to collaborative partnership. We acknowledge the many competing priorities that the company is contending with as they prepare to bring Opill to the market in early 2024 and value the company's expressed commitment to making the product accessible and affordable to people of all ages. Further, we acknowledge the key role that major retailers will play in ensuring that Opill is affordable and accessible on the shelf in stores across the country. We also plan to reach out to major retailers to discuss strategies for ensuring that Opill is affordable and accessible to everyone who wants and needs it.

We are thrilled that Opill was approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last July, and that it will soon be available as the first-ever over-the-counter (OTC) birth control pill in the United States, as well as becoming the most effective form of birth control available OTC. Its approval is a landmark achievement for reproductive health, rights and justice and will improve contraceptive access across the country at a time when attacks on reproductive health care have limited many peoples' ability to control their reproductive futures.

As you know, the [Free the Pill coalition](#) played a key role in this win. Since 2004, the coalition has led advocacy and conducted research to make the case for OTC birth control pills in the United States. In 2016, the coalition [formed a partnership with Perrigo \(then HRA Pharma\)](#) to support the company's application for an Rx-to-OTC switch for Opill. Members of the coalition provided input on and supported with recruitment for their actual use trial, as well as undertaking our own research to bolster the [scientific evidence](#) on safety, effectiveness, and acceptability of bringing Opill over the counter. Much of this data was cited by the FDA and its advisors in their decision to approve Opill for OTC use. Our coalition also mobilized hundreds of individuals to submit written comments to the FDA docket, as well as over 30 partners—including reproductive justice advocates, health care providers, young people, researchers, and more—to [testify in favor of bringing Opill OTC](#) during the FDA's advisory committee meeting in May 2023. In fact, numerous FDA advisors cited these testimonies—and those of young

people in particular—as an important factor in their unanimous recommendation for the application’s approval. Indeed, many of those who testified represent communities that currently face disproportionate barriers to contraceptive access, including cost.

Our coalition is now focused on ensuring that once Opill becomes available at retailers and online in early 2024, it is equitably accessible—which to us means being priced affordably and fully covered by insurance. We are glad to see that Perrigo has [publicly expressed its commitment](#) to making Opill “affordable and accessible to women of all ages,” and we urge the company to follow through on this commitment. We also understand that Perrigo alone is not responsible for setting the price consumers will pay for this product, and so we urge retailers, too, to join in this commitment to pricing Opill affordably, particularly for those who face the most barriers to access. As advocates and leaders in the reproductive health, rights, and justice fields, we recognize systemic racism, structural barriers, and other forms of oppression as root causes of contraceptive inequities. We are committed to ensuring access for the communities that currently face the highest barriers to reproductive health care and would benefit the most from OTC options. A retail price of \$15 for a 3-month supply would help ensure that this groundbreaking product is affordable for those who face the most barriers to access, many of whom are also those with the least ability to pay. Additionally, a robust assistance program must be put in place by Perrigo to support those who are unable to pay the retail price.

According to a [recent, nationally representative survey](#), 50% of females ages 18-49 were only willing and able to pay between \$0 and \$10 per month for an OTC birth control pill. This includes 10% of respondents who said they would be unable to pay anything for an OTC pill. Similarly, an [Ibis Reproductive Health study](#) from 2015 found that 54% of teens could pay no more than \$10 per month for an OTC birth control pill. In a more recent [2022 survey](#) focused on understanding barriers people had faced when accessing oral contraceptives as young people, affordability was a top challenge that respondents identified. An affordable price is also essential for ensuring access for uninsured or underinsured populations, who have to [pay out of pocket](#) for birth control pills, and would benefit most from an OTC pill by saving on the cost of a provider visit to access prescription-only options.

Perrigo’s and retailers’ decision to price Opill affordably can help to combat contraceptive inequities—rooted in systemic racism and other forms of oppression—that already persist across the United States. As a result of these inequities, the communities that currently face the highest barriers to accessing contraception are often the same communities for whom a high retail price would put Opill out of reach altogether. Studies show that cost barriers disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, Latina/x, Asian American Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. Specifically, a [recent study](#) that focused on the contraceptive preferences of these communities showed that concerns about the cost of an OTC pill being higher than the cost of a prescription-only pill was one reason why some respondents would not consider using an OTC birth control pill. Though we are also advocating for OTC birth control to be fully covered by insurance without a prescription or cost sharing, we know that because US health insurance is often tied to employment, a high retail price could also put Opill out of reach for people who don’t have employer-based insurance. Research also shows that [women with lower incomes, women of color, and women who do not hold US citizenship](#), as well as gender non-conforming and [transgender](#)

[individuals](#), are more likely to be uninsured. In addition, privacy concerns around who can see insurance claims can also limit people's ability to utilize insurance to cover contraception, especially for young people. These communities are also those that stand to gain the most from OTC access to Opill, and for whom Perrigo and retailers' commitment to access could make a huge difference. A price of \$15 for a three-month supply would ensure that many of the people most impacted by structural barriers have equitable access to Opill and can plan their futures.

While setting an affordable price is a critical aspect of access, we also recognize that for some people working to make ends meet, no price point will be affordable for accessing Opill. It is imperative that Perrigo follow through on its commitment to provide a consumer assistance program that truly supports equitable access for all by providing discounted and free options for getting Opill. To be easily accessible for folks who face the highest barriers, the consumer assistance plan must be available in multiple languages and be accessible to people regardless of age, citizenship status, or location in the United States. It should also be accessible for people who do not have internet access. Finally, people should not be required to prove their eligibility or in any way compromise their right to privacy and confidentiality in order to access it. We also encourage Perrigo to explore opportunities to support access to Opill through safety net programs, offer discounted rates to 340B providers and community pharmacies, donate product to community outlets, college campuses, and distributors, and provide discounts in the form of online coupons.

As cost remains the top challenge for consumer access, it is incumbent upon all of us to remain committed to eliminating barriers to contraceptive equity and to work as hard as we can to ensure fair and equitable access for all. Now, more than ever, we must prioritize contraceptive equity—and for Opill, that means fulfilling Perrigo's promise to set an affordable price and establish a robust consumer assistance program that allows everyone to benefit from this groundbreaking advancement in reproductive health.

Sincerely,

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