

Darlene Siedschlaw  
DWS Consulting  
436 Oxford  
Bozeman, MT 59715

SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY	
EXHIBIT NO. <u>7</u>	BILL NO. _____
DATE: <u>1-24-05</u>	DATE: _____
BILL NO. <u>SB 203</u>	EXHIBIT NO. _____
SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY	

Dear Chairman Brent Cromley and Members of the Committee:

My name is Darlene Siedschlaw and I am CEO of a management and consulting firm in Bozeman, Montana. Before moving to Bozeman, I was a member of the Equal Employment Advisory Council, a group of the nation's largest employers that was formed in 1976. The council focuses on filing friend of the court briefs in precedent-setting employment related litigation in federal courts. The EEAC membership is made up of representatives from the nation's 330 largest employers and serves as a valuable legal and information resource for its member corporations.

I'd like to inform the committee that in December 2000, the Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC) ruled that an employer's failure to provide coverage for contraceptive drugs, devices, and services when it covers other preventive measures constitutes sex discrimination under federal law.<sup>(1)</sup> This ruling makes it clear that equal treatment in the workplace means women are entitled to benefits packages that include equitable coverage for prescription contraceptives.

Still, many employers and insurance companies continue to refuse to cover contraception despite legal rulings finding that failure to provide contraceptive equity is illegal sex discrimination, and research showing health benefits and cost savings. Policymakers must continue to advocate for contraceptive equity laws to ensure that women have access to this basic health care need and to protect Montana's largest employers from lawsuits. Such policies will prevent unintended pregnancies and reduce the need for abortion, and are required as a simple matter of justice and equality.

**Please vote YES on SB 203, entitled "Require Insurance to Cover Contraception."**

Sincerely,



Darlene Siedschlaw, DWS Consulting

<sup>(1)</sup> Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Decision on Coverage of Contraception (Dec. 14, 2000), at <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/decision-contraception.html>.