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## A simple proposition: Women's preventive care saves lives, money

Jun 20, 2013 | In The News

*Cecile Richards and Dr. Jeanne Conry, The Hill*

### **A simple proposition: Women's preventive care saves lives, money**

A couple weeks ago, a woman named Rebekah sent a note to Planned Parenthood. "As a dirt poor waitress struggling through community college," she wrote, "I could not afford medical care or insurance." But because the local Planned Parenthood health center in Santa Monica was at her college, she was able to get basic well-woman care and birth control at no cost.

Rebekah wrote to say she had since finished community college and earned a master's degree from Harvard. Having access to preventive care allowed Rebekah to plan for her son – and today, he's 8 years old. It is with stories like Rebekah's in mind that we are thrilled to announce the Women's Preventive Health Awareness Campaign Act: a new bill sponsored by **Rep. Ami Bera, (D-Calif.)**, an M.D., that calls for the Department of Health and Human Services to launch a national outreach campaign to raise awareness about the importance of women's preventive care.

During his twenty-year medical career, Bera worked to improve the availability, quality, and affordability of health care. He understands how women's health affects families and communities – not only as a doctor, but as a father of a 15-year-old daughter and [husband to a women's health advocate, Dr. Janine Bera](#).

Right now, too many women are going without lifesaving health care, from cancer and STD screenings to well-woman visits and birth control. Preventive care is essential to staying healthy – and critical in helping to fight the number one cause of death in American women: heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases, responsible for one death nearly every minute.

Preventive care saves lives – and it saves money. Catching diseases early while they are easily treatable, or preventing them altogether, isn't just good for patients – it costs much less than treating someone with an advanced illness.

That's why health care provider organizations like Planned Parenthood and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists worked together with Congress and the Obama administration to help make sure that the Affordable Care Act would cover preventive care—a huge step forward for all Americans, especially women. Approximately 47 million women across the country stand to benefit from no-co-pay well-woman care under the Affordable Care Act.

Here's the catch: Too many people are unaware of the difference the Affordable Care Act can make. According to an April 2013 poll by the nonpartisan Kaiser Foundation, 42 percent of Americans do not know the Affordable Care Act is the law of the land. Twelve percent think it was repealed by Congress.

The Women's Preventive Health Awareness Campaign Act, supported by Planned Parenthood and ACOG, will help bridge these gaps through education and by creating online tools and resources to expand the benefit's reach. The campaign will include distributing updates on recommendations for women's preventive care, encouraging women to see providers for well-woman visits, and helping to spread the word about the potential of health care reform to change women's lives.

Increasing women's awareness of and access to preventive care is a simple, common sense step we can take to save lives and reduce health care costs. It should be a top priority for health care providers and elected officials alike.

Richards is president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Conry is president of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

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