

## SB-523

# Contraceptive Equity Act of 2021

Position: Support

### *Bill Summary*

- Addresses healthcare inequities by updating birth control policies to allow contraceptive access regardless of an individual's gender or insurance coverage status.
- Requires coverage of over-the-counter birth control options to increase access to time-sensitive care.
- Expands contraceptive coverage benefits to California university employees and their students, and state workers.
- Clearly prohibits private sector employers from discriminating against their employees based on their contraceptive and reproductive health decisions.
- Specifies that a religious employer's right to obtain health insurance without contraceptive coverage does not extend to contraceptive drugs or services (such as hormonal birth control or a vasectomy) used for other medical purposes, narrowing employers' ability to deny their employees access to contraception
- Changes the language of California's contraceptive equity laws to be more gender inclusive.

### *California Freethought Day Urges the Passage of SB-523*

California has stark health disparities in contraceptive access and care that have only been exacerbated the last few years due to the pandemic. The Guttmacher Institute reports that 38 percent of Black women and 45 percent of Latinas are having difficulty accessing birth control since the pandemic began, while only 29 percent of white women said the same. Increasing contraceptive equity and removing barriers to care will help improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes, especially among those with the least access.

Making contraception accessible to everyone decreases negative health outcomes on critical measures like STD transmissions, unintended pregnancy, and infant and maternal mortality.

With well-documented health inequities based on race, income, and insurance, it is critical that our state eliminate these barriers to contraceptives.