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## Bill to limit minors' Rx is dead

### Ariz. lawmaker kills proposal aimed at teens' birth control

By Howard Fischer

CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX — Teens will be able to continue getting birth control in Arizona without a parent's consent.

House Majority Leader Steve Tully said Wednesday that he is scrapping his legislation that would have made it illegal for a doctor to prescribe any medication to anyone younger than 18 without the specific approval of a parent or guardian.

Tully said there are too many conflicting stories about exactly what doctors do now, or even what they are legally required to do.

His decision to kill the proposal pleased Charlotte Harrison, executive director of the Arizona Family Planning Council. She said passage of the measure would have deterred some teens from getting not just birth control but also treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

However, Tully may try to have the issue studied over the summer with an eye toward recommendations for next year's legislative session.

He said he was disappointed that the debate over House Bill 2707 had been reduced to the question of birth control. But Tully conceded that he introduced the measure in the first place after a complaint from a single father who learned his daughter was using birth-control pills.

"He didn't understand how someone could give his daughter prescription medications without his knowing this is going on," Tully said.

The Phoenix Republican said a much larger issue is involved. Tully, the father of four girls, questioned whether a teenager should be able to get prescription medicines from a doctor — possibly one who has not known the child for any length of time — without parental consent. That, he said, is why his legislation was drawn up to make it illegal to write any prescription for any minor without a parent's approval.

He got the measure through the House Health Committee on a 6-3 vote. But as Tully prepared to take the issue to the House floor, he said, he received conflicting information on exactly what doctors do now.

For example, he said children sometimes are dropped at a doctor's office for an appointment by a relative or friend, with no parent present during an examination and subsequent medication order. Tully said doctors would assume they already had consent to treat the children.

Harrison said state law generally does require parental consent for any medical treatment, including prescriptions. But she said this legislation would have overridden other laws that say doctors can prescribe treatment for venereal diseases.

And what about birth control?

"There is no law against it," Harrison said. "The only thing we have is an opinion from the attorney general in 1979

that says a provider, a clinician, cannot be liable criminally or civilly for providing family planning services to a minor without parental consent."

Harrison said her organization, which provides family planning to low-income women and men, does try to encourage teens who seek treatment to involve their parents. And she said state laws require her staff members to notify police in cases of suspected criminal activity, such as when a young teen is sexually active with an older man, or there is any sign of an underage girl being coerced.

But she said a teen having consensual sex would not be turned away for not involving a parent.

"If she's sexually active, you talk to her about involving her parents; you talk to her about being abstinent; you talk to her about whether she is in a coercive relationship or not," Harrison said. "But you treat her for the STD (sexually transmitted disease). And you sure want to make sure she doesn't get pregnant."

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