

Senartor Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Services Committee members. My name is Lena and I am here to testify on in support of **Senate Bill 1343 AN ACT CONCERNING COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.**

I am making this statement from my experience as a victim. I am one of such victims who were given the choice of taking the full dose of Emergency Contraception at the emergency room after I was gang raped. I am very grateful for the hospital to have given me that choice.

September 26, 2003, my life was forcibly changed. I was carjacked, kidnapped, and robbed, by four masked gun men. Then, I was gang raped and nearly killed. Luckily I survived and am sitting here and testifying right now about this Emergency Contraception issue. After I was left for dead, I was carried into the hospital. During the rape and initial physical examinations, I was informed about the possibility of pregnancy and was provided the option of taking Emergency Contraception. I knew I wanted to take it as soon as it was mentioned. I did not want to take a chance to have the agony of carrying a child created by my rapists. Getting pregnant with my unknown rapists who even had tried to kill me, would be the last thing I wanted to happen. Furthermore, even if my rapists were arrested, the idea of not knowing which ones had got me pregnant made me sick to my stomach. I told a nurse that I wanted to take the full dose of Emergency Contraception. When I was in the emergency room, I was so overwhelmed by the attack and the pain of physical injuries and so focused on giving accurate statements to the police and doctors that I did not have any energy left for me to think about the possibility of getting pregnant, even though I had known the existence of Emergency Contraception. If I was not provided information of Emergency Contraception that night, it is scary to think what might have happened. Again, I am very grateful that the hospital provided me the choice of taking the Emergency Contraception.

I cannot even imagine as a victim to be sent from the healthcare facilities to the pharmacies to get Emergency Contraception. Victims may be traumatized and/or suffer from the physical injuries. Being examined at the healthcare facilities may be traumatizing and humiliating experiences for victims. By sending such victims to the pharmacies to get Emergency Contraception will just prolong such burden and give further agony to them. It is just another cruel thing to do for such victims. For this reason, there may be some victims who wanted to take the full dose of Emergency Contraception initially, and may not end up taking the Emergency Contraception by not going to the pharmacies. Since there is a time limit for this Emergency Contraception to be useful, it makes sense that the healthcare facilities that took care of victims provide the information and the option of the pills to them.

Providing Emergency Contraception to the victims of sexual assault should be discussed and thought of separately from the abortion issue. Being raped is not the victims' choice and because of this simple

reason, being pregnant result of the attack is not their choice, either. It is humane and important for all healthcare facilities to provide the option of taking the full dose of Emergency Contraception to sexual assault victims. Whether or not victims take Emergency Contraception should be completely up to them. There may be victims that choose not to take Emergency Contraception and it is, of course, their choice. The fact that victims are given that choice is important.

There was nobody to help victims when they were attacked. They went through and survived the ordeal by themselves. One of the things healthcare facilities can do for such victims is to give semblance of comfort that they deserve after the attack in informing them the possibilities of what may come of the rape and giving choices what they can do about such possibilities. It may not be easy things for victims to listen. It is, however, better than not knowing such possibilities and not having options. Again, being raped is not the victims' choice and neither being pregnant results of the rape. Nobody in this world has the right to give victims the responsibility and burden of carrying and raising children of rapists without their consent. It should be the entirely the victims' choice.

Please put yourself into the victims' shoes and think about following questions. Would you not want to have the choice of taking the full dose of Emergency Contraception after your body and soul are violated? Is it fair for you as a victim to be limited to access Emergency Contraception because of the healthcare facility's belief? Please keep in your mind that you may even not have the choice where you are carried. How would you feel if you were not given proper information and choice of taking Emergency Contraception, and because of that you have to live with agony of not knowing if you got pregnant with your rapist's child? How would you feel if you are sent to the pharmacy to get the pills after you have gone through the humiliating and scary experiences of rape and rape examinations? Do you really think that you would have any energy left to stop by another place and wait in line to get the pills after such ordeal? The answer should be easy and simple.

Again, please put yourself into the victims' shoes and think about this issue. This issue is not about the abortion. This is about the victims whose body and soul were both violated. This is about providing choices to victims that they deserve. Being sexually assaulted is not the victims' choice, and nor is being pregnant with the rapist's child.