



**Testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 1343
An Act Concerning Compassionate Care for Victims of Sexual Assault**

**Submitted to the Human Services Committee
Public Hearing, March 13, 2007**

Senator Harris and Representative Villano, and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Melissa Malagutti and I am the Program Director of Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury. Safe Haven provides free comprehensive supportive services to victims of sexual assault. The agency provides medical and legal advocacy, individual counseling, support groups and a 24 hour crisis hotline. **I support Raised Bill No. 1343, An Act Concerning Compassionate Care for Victims of Sexual Assault.**

A few months ago, I met a victim of sexual assault at a Catholic-affiliated hospital. She was in her early 20's and had been sexually assaulted by knifepoint in her apartment. She was severely traumatized and was dealing with questioning from police detectives. She was concerned about pregnancy, but was not given EC at the hospital. This victim called into our office the next day and was confused as to where she needed to go to obtain EC-she hadn't been given that information by the hospital staff. We advised her to go to a local clinic. At this point, time had passed and I was not sure she would be able to obtain EC within the 72 hours from her assault. Unfortunately, I never heard back from her. After all she had been through, I truly hoped she was able to get to the clinic and hoped she would be able to survive the possible consequences if she did not.

I have been a rape crisis counselor for eight years. During this time, I have responded to numerous calls from our area hospitals to provide support to victims of sexual assault. In the area that we serve, there are two hospitals, one Catholic-affiliated and one secular. Victims of sexual assault are consistently given emergency contraception at the secular hospital, however, when we receive calls from our local Catholic-affiliated hospital, we must let victims know they have to obtain EC at another location. We have found that the doctors and nurses do not even mention emergency contraception to victims, let alone discuss their options in obtaining it. It is an issue that is simply not discussed. When I meet these women at the hospital after a traumatic assault, I think to myself "after all these victims have been through, why is the responsibility placed on them?" It is the responsibility of the ER staff to dispense this medication at the time of treatment, not for a traumatized victim to have to ask. This is happening too often to victims we serve. Victims of sexual assault deserve compassionate care at *every* hospital. I urge you to vote YES for Bill 1343.

Thank you for your consideration.

Melissa Malagutti
Program Director-Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury

29 Central Avenue
Waterbury, CT 06702
203-753-3613