



Connecticut  
Women's  
Education and  
Legal Fund  
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*Human Services Committee*

*SB 1343 An Act Concerning Compassionate Care for Victims of Sexual Assault*

*Submitted by: Amy Miller, Program & Public Policy Director*

*Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund*

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My name is Amy Miller and I am the Program & Public Policy Director at the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering women to enhance their personal and professional lives. I am writing to urge you to support *S.B. 1343 An Act Concerning Compassionate Care for Victims of Sexual Assault*. This bill is important to securing the dignity and safety of women at a traumatic time.

For CWEALF's 34 years, we have worked on access for women to make informed and appropriate choices about their lives. We support SB 1343 for this reason. Requiring hospitals to provide emergency contraception to rape survivors would rectify the current gap in emergency care and ensure that women of all income levels would have access to every available means to protect their health and well-being. Sexual assault victims have already suffered and should not have to face the further trauma of unintended pregnancy. Routine counseling about and the provision of emergency contraception would help rape victims avoid unintended pregnancy, prevent abortions, and safeguard the victims' mental health and protect their reproductive health and rights.

Many hospitals refuse to inform sexual assault survivors about the availability of emergency contraception and even few provide emergency contraception on the spot. During the first six months of 2006, 40% of rape victims were not offered or did not receive the full dose of emergency contraception at the hospital from where they went for treatment.

Women who have been raped who do not obtain emergency contraception in an emergency room must track it down on their own. Low-income women and women without health care in particular have fewer options when it comes to seeking medical assistance. They may not be able to access additional resources once the initial hospital examination is performed. In addition to the emotional and financial burden this imposes, a rape victim would face increased risk of pregnancy because of the delay inherent in having to take further steps to track down emergency contraception.

Standards of emergency care established by the American Medical Association, among other groups, require that rape survivors be offered emergency contraception. A 2006 poll conducted by Quinnipiac University found that, by a 78-17 percent margin, including 74 percent of Catholics, voters support a law requiring Connecticut hospitals, including Catholic hospitals, to provide emergency contraception to sexual assault victims. Rape survivors should be able to make treatment decisions based on accurate and complete medical information and their own ethical or religious beliefs. Emergency care facilities treat people

of many faiths, and should not be allowed to impose one set of religious beliefs on the people of diverse backgrounds who seek care.

We need to support women who have been raped. We can reduce the stigma and trauma associated with rape by treating women with dignity and respect from the moment they begin their treatment. A key component of that respect is respecting a woman's right to make the medical decisions that are in her best interest. Please support SB 1343 and show that Connecticut is committed to the physical and social health of our women. Thank you for your time.