



Connecticut Region

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March 13, 2007

In support of S.B. 1343 "An Act Concerning Compassionate Care for Victims of Sexual Assault"

Testimony from Gayle Weinstein, CT Advocacy Chair, on Behalf of the Connecticut Region of Hadassah, WZOA

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to show support for S.B. no. 1343, "An Act Concerning Compassionate Care for Victims of Sexual Assault."

Today, I am here representing the 8000 members of Hadassah who reside in Connecticut. HADASSAH, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, is the largest volunteer women's organization in the US. Our members are motivated and inspired to strengthen their partnership with Israel, ensure Jewish continuity, and realize their potential as a dynamic force in American society. In the U.S., we lead a strong, grassroots advocacy effort to give a voice to issues that affect us as American women.

Hadassah strongly believes a woman has the right, under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, to make decisions about her reproductive health in consultation with her own religious beliefs, rather than have those decisions made for her. We support religious freedom, but feel that it is vital to find ways to accommodate religious observances in ways that do not interfere with access to health care and reproductive rights. If a victim of sexual assault is not given accurate medical information, or is not offered what is generally considered the accepted standard of care, then she is virtually robbed of her ability to make her own informed decision.

Further, as mothers, partners and women, Hadassah members believe all people should have equal access to health care services that meet accepted standards of care. We support this right regardless of race, religion, ability to pay or geographic location. After the violence of rape,

a victim is too emotionally distraught, perhaps even unconscious, and may not be able to tell an ambulance driver which hospital to take them to. Or, they simply might not be aware of their options concerning hospital choice or medical treatment. This potentially limits the victim's access to health care.

Hadassah, as an organization which advocates for people around the world and especially in the US, supports this which ensures fair and equal access to care for rape victims. Our 8000 members in CT and their families, your constituents, hope you will support this bill too. Thank you.