

Testimony for Bill #1343

Hello and good afternoon to Chariman Villano, Chairman Harris and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Kelly Gigante and I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut, in the School of Social Work, majoring in Public Policy. I am here today to ask for your support for Bill #1343, an Act Concerning Compassionate Care for Rape Victims. Rape is not an easy issue to think about and discuss, and for the victims of rape, one can only imagine the trauma; physical, mental, and emotional that these women suffer. I have two friends who have been victims of rape. One friend was repeatedly raped and beaten by her husband, and then thrown out into their yard, without any clothes, and forced to stay there until he unlocked the house again. He raped her more in the winter, because he knew she would suffer more outside in the freezing cold. Eventually she was able to hide some clothes in the yard, and one day, after being raped and beaten by her husband, she found the courage to find those clothes in the yard, put them on, and go to a neighbor's house for help. She was fortunate to have never gotten pregnant. She is now divorced, received counseling, and is now an attorney in Washington D.C. advocating for women's rights. She often speaks about the importance and crucial need for emergency contraception for rape victims, and when she speaks, she is strong enough to talk about her own painful experiences. My other friend was repeated raped by her father and babysitter between the ages of four to eight. She was then date raped as a teenager. Her trauma is extensive, and she is now 29 years old and still actively going to therapy to heal these wounds. She speaks about the rape as a teenager, and the absolute terror and helplessness she felt not only about the rape, but about the weeks she spent worrying and terrified about the possibility of being pregnant. When we think about the trauma of rape, we must realize it is not only the violent act itself, but also the weeks of fear waiting to find out if the rape now has left the victim pregnant. It is critical that emergency contraception be available at all hospitals in Connecticut. Having emergency contraception available at a pharmacy is not enough. A rape victim should not have to seek out an open and willing pharmacy after she has been discharged from the hospital after being raped. If the rape victim has to remain in the hospital because of her injuries, then one cannot dispute the absolute necessity for all hospitals to have emergency contraception available at all times. Emergency contraception now is 95% effective in preventing pregnancy when taken within the first twenty-four hours after the assault occurs, and the effectiveness rate

drops to 61% between 48 and 72 hours after unprotected sex. The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Medical Association, the American college of Emergency Physicians and the World Health Organization all agree that offering emergency contraception as soon as possible after a rape is an undisputable medical standard.

I hope that you will agree, and put your support behind Bill #1343. Thank you so much for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

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