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

My name is Carissa Simpson. I am the Coordinator of Advocacy Services for the Sexual Assault Crisis Services at the Women & Families Center in Meriden, Middletown, New Haven. I have been an advocate for more than 5 years. My colleagues and I are the staff and volunteers who answer hotlines all hours of the day and work with men, women and children who are working to rebuild their lives as survivors of a horrific crime. We are the people who hold the hands of women and men who brave coming forward after an assault to the hospital for an exam and evidence collection. I want to tell you about two recent experiences I have had assisting rape victims and their struggle to obtain emergency contraception.

The first case was that of a young woman who was drugged and raped by an acquaintance. She was brought to the emergency room within 48 hours of the assault. She was upset and confused, and a little woozy from the effects of the drugs the rapist had given her. I supported the victim through the rape kit and evidence collection exam, explaining the process to her as she was still groggy and sleepy. The victim was concerned about the possibility of a pregnancy, so I advocated for the doctor to give her Emergency Contraception. The doctor stated that he had been ordered not to give EC under any circumstances. I pressed him on this because I knew the victim, in her present state, would be unable to go elsewhere to obtain the medication and she really only had a small window of time in which EC would still be effective for her. The victim also begged the doctor to give her at least a prescription for EC. After much pleading and tears on the part of the victim, the doctor gave her a prescription. By the time we were finished, her parents and the friend who brought her to the hospital were there to take her home and ensure she got the prescription filled. She may have gotten it just in time but was exhausted from the fight she

More recently, an advocate that I supervise was called to the hospital to assist a victim with a disability who had been repeatedly raped by a neighbor who used a weapon and threats of violence during his assaults. These rapes had been ongoing for several months and it was only after speaking with advocates on our hotline, the victim felt safe and empowered to seek help within 72 hours of the final attack. The victim was extremely frightened but also exhausted and stressed from the violence she had endured.

The exam took several hours and was a challenge due to the victim's disabilities. She was amazingly patient and got through the exam. The victim asked about EC but was not given any information about it. She was told that she would have to have a test done to determine if she was pregnant or ovulating. The victim was willing to comply, however she was unable to give a urine sample. She was asked to provide a blood sample which she felt was invasive and made her very emotional. She was told that the results of the blood test would be available in 24 hours. At some point during the visit, the victim was given antibiotics to treat any potential STDs, but in the confusion of the process, she assumed she had been given emergency contraception. It wasn't until two weeks later, when the victim read her medical records, that she found out she had never gotten EC and the hospital never called with the results of her blood test. The victim was in shock and was upset and devastated that she might have to endure a pregnancy by the man who so brutally attacked her.

Unfortunately, the clock had run out on this victim. After suffering through months of vicious rapes and finally having the courage to come forward, this victim was denied a vital medicine that would have eased her mind and allowed her to begin her healing journey. I have since been counseling this woman who still hasn't gotten over the disappointment and betrayal she feels by the way she was treated at the hospital that day.

I urge you to vote in support of Senate Bill 1343 to assure the women of Connecticut know that they will receive compassionate care at all of Connecticut's hospitals if they are victims of sexual assault.

Thank you very much for your time.