

For Immediate Release
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Media Contact: Sara Finger
(608) 251-1039

WAWH Applauds Introduction of Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Bill
Congratulates Senate Leadership and Works for Bill Passage

Madison – The Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health urges lawmakers and citizens to support the Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Bill launched today by Senator Judy Robson. The bill would ensure that rape victims learn about emergency contraception (EC) in every Wisconsin hospital emergency room, and that EC would be dispensed upon request.

It is estimated that over 300,000 women are sexually assaulted in the United States every year and an estimated 25,000 of those women will become pregnant as a result. Over 80% of these pregnancies could be prevented through the use of EC.

Rape is a crime perpetrated against women of all ages, races, religions and economic backgrounds. Rape is a violent crime that causes physical harm and mental trauma. In the case of rape, the trauma is compounded by the real risk of becoming pregnant as a result of the sexual assault.

The Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Bill would require hospitals to provide information on and access to emergency contraception for victims of sexual assault. Only 1/3 of Wisconsin emergency rooms unconditionally provide emergency contraception to rape victims.

"EC should be the standard of care for all health care facilities that treat victims of sexual assault. Requiring emergency health care facilities to provide EC is a commonsense step we can take to reduce the number of pregnancies that result from sexual assault, and offer some comfort to rape victims," said WAWH Director Sara Finger. "EC would help women and families avoid the often-devastating effects of unintended pregnancy."

EC is a concentrated dose of ordinary birth control pills. Approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), EC can prevent pregnancy when taken up to 120 hours after unprotected intercourse or contraceptive failure. EC has no effect on an established pregnancy.

EC has been endorsed as safe and effective by the medical community. The American College of Emergency Physicians which includes EC in its sexual assault protocols, and the American College of Gynecology explicitly recommends that EC should be offered to all victims if they are at risk of pregnancy.

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The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.

To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: www.supportwomenshealth.org