

## **Compassionate Care for Rape Victims SB 129**

Victims of rape or incest deserve immediate access to safe, efficient methods of pregnancy prevention. The Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Act ensures that this occurs by requiring hospital emergency rooms to conform to the American Medical Association's standard of care and provide rape victims with information about and access to emergency contraception (EC). Consistent polling shows that over 80% of Wisconsin voters report that they favored ensuring access to EC for rape victims.

### **Emergency Contraception is a Safe and Effective Way to Prevent Unintended Pregnancies**

- EC is basic birth control. It is simply a single dose of the same medication found in birth control pills that will prevent pregnancy up to 120 hours after unprotected sex.
- If taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, Plan B, the most commonly used EC, has an 89% success rate in preventing unintended pregnancies.
- EC works just like regular birth control. EC will not cause an abortion in a woman who is already pregnant or harm an existing pregnancy.

### **Rape Victims Are Often Denied Information and Access to Emergency Contraception**

- A 2006 survey of 109 Wisconsin hospital emergency departments shows that only 33% provide EC on site without exception to rape victims in the emergency room.
- 42% of Wisconsin hospital emergency rooms do not offer EC to rape victims at all.
- Catholic hospitals, which make up 41% of Wisconsin's emergency rooms, as a group are much less likely to follow the required standard of care and provide rape victims with EC.

### **Rape Victims Should be Able to Protect Themselves from the Additional Tragedy of an Unintended Pregnancy**

- In 2004, 4,775 female sexual assaults were reported in Wisconsin. Experts agree that this estimate is low because only about 1/3 of victims ever report their assault.
- Nationally, over 300,000 women are raped each year resulting in over 25,000 unintended pregnancies and approximately 16,000 abortions. About 22,000 or 88% of these unintended pregnancies could be prevented each year if all rape victims had timely access to EC.

### **Providing Emergency Contraception Is the Standard of Care for Rape Victims**

- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association support widespread access to EC as a means of reducing unintended pregnancies. The AMA guidelines require counseling and the provision of EC to rape victims as the established standard of care.
- All hospitals that provide care to rape victims should follow established standards of care. The Religious Directives for Catholic Hospitals make clear that EC is an acceptable treatment option for rape victims who are not pregnant. The Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Act accommodates this directive by not requiring hospitals to provide EC to a rape victim who is confirmed pregnant by a pregnancy test.