

**For Immediate Release
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Prevention and Compassion Key to Women's Health

Violence against women recognized during National Women's Health Week

Madison – Midway through National Women's Health Week, the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) highlights *Compassionate Care for Rape Victims* legislation being voted on by the state Senate today. The Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Bill, Senate Bill 129, 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 percent of these pregnancies could be prevented through the use of EC.

A 2006 survey of 109 Wisconsin hospital emergency departments showed that only 33% provide EC on site without exception to rape victims in the emergency room. Forty-two percent of Wisconsin hospital emergency rooms do not offer EC to rape victims at all.

EC is a concentrated dose of ordinary birth control pills. Approved for use by the U.S. 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.

"Emergency contraception 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 teens, women and families avoid the often-devastating effects of unintended pregnancy."

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association (AMA) support widespread access to EC as a means of reducing unintended pregnancies. AMA guidelines also require counseling and the provision of EC to rape victims as the established standard of care.

In 2006, the FDA approved Plan B, the most commonly prescribed form of EC, for over-the-counter (OTC) sales to consumers 18 and older.

"Despite recent efforts to make EC more available to women 18 and older, we must still ensure rape victims in our state won't be forced to shop around for the comprehensive and compassionate care they deserve", stated Finger.

To learn more about compassionate care for rape victims, visit www.supportwomenshealth.org.

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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