

Clinton-Rothman Bill: Hospitals Should Offer Rape Victims Emergency Contraceptive

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Clinton Reintroduces Bill Requiring Hospitals to Offer Rape Victims Emergency Contraception; Rothman Champions Bill in the House

"CARE" Act would ensure women are offered necessary medical care and treatment

(Washington, DC)—Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) marked National Crime Victim's Week by reintroducing legislation today to ensure that survivors of rape and incest have access to and information about emergency contraception. The Compassionate Assistance for Rape Emergencies Act, or CARE Act, would also require hospitals to provide an assessment of the individual's risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections. Representative Steve Rothman (D-NJ-9) is the champion of this legislation in the House of Representatives.

"I am proud that for four years, this has already been law in New York State. Survivors of rape and incest receive information and access to emergency contraception at every hospital in the state. And as a result, victims are getting better care than they ever have before in New York. This bill will allow women nationwide to benefit from the same standard of care New Yorkers receive," said Senator Clinton.

"By providing access to emergency contraception immediately, hospitals could help alleviate some of the trauma associated with rape and eliminate the heart-wrenching decision on whether to have an abortion that thousands of survivors face," said Representative Rothman, adding, "I applaud Senator Clinton for her consistent advocacy of high-quality health care for women everywhere. Together, we will fight to pass the CARE Act in Congress."

Every two and a half minutes a woman is sexually assaulted in the United States and an estimated 25,000 women become pregnant as a result. According to a study published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 50 percent of the pregnancies that are a result of rape or incest end in abortion. By receiving timely access to emergency contraception in hospital emergency rooms, up to 95 percent of those unintended pregnancies could be prevented, causing rape survivors to avoid the additional trauma of facing an unintended pregnancy.

The U.S. Department of Justice guidelines for the treatment of rape victims make no reference to emergency contraception as a potential option for sexual assault victims. However, protocols for sexual assault victims developed by public health employees at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention include access to emergency contraception as a viable option.

Last year, the FDA made emergency contraception available over the counter for women eighteen years of age and older. Despite the ideologically driven agenda against Plan B, research shows that emergency contraception is safe and effective for preventing pregnancy. More than 70 major medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommended that Plan B be made available over the counter. This bill will make sure hospitals provide women in crisis with the necessary information to evaluate this option for themselves. In addition, the bill ensures that patients can receive post-exposure treatment for sexually transmitted infections for which the deferral of treatment either would significantly reduce treatment efficacy or would pose substantial risk to the individual's health.

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