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TO: Senate Committee On Health

RE: SCR63/SR37 URGING ALL HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOMS IN THE STATE TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION ON DEMAND TO VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RAPE.

DATE: Monday, March 30, 2009 at 3:30 PM, room 016

Chair Ige and Members of the Committee on Health:

As a long time advocate for public health and especially women's health care, in the state of Hawai'i I'm testifying in support of SCR 63 and SR 37, which urge hospitals to provide information about emergency contraception to women who are sexually assaulted and to provide emergency contraception when requested.

It is very disappointing that the bills to effectuate this protocol have not passed over the last several sessions. These resos, if passed, will at least send a message to the hospitals which are blocking the legislation that there are many women's health advocates for whom these measures are not political, but just good public health policy.

Hawai'i should not turn its back on sexual assault survivors and force them to face the added burden of possibly becoming pregnant as a result of rape. The denial of access to contraceptive services for sexual assault survivors has severe repercussions for women's right to live their lives and their ability to participate equally in society. Simply put, reproductive health care is essential to a woman's opportunity – the opportunity to obtain a good education, to improve her economic circumstances, to participate in public life, to define her family, to decide what makes a meaningful life, and to live that life.

According to the most recent Crime in Hawaii report, there were 377 forcible rapes reported to law enforcement in Hawaii in 2007.[1] While Hawaii's overall crime rate was down, the rate of forced rapes increased by 3.9%.[2] Many of these victims required emergency medical care at one of Hawaii's emergency

rooms. Tragically, according to a 2002 survey conducted by Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, only 2 out of Hawaii's 20 emergency rooms provide emergency contraceptive access to sexual assault victims.

Further, please consider the following points:

- All emergency care facilities should offer EC to a woman during her initial exam following a sexual assault.
- Major medical groups recommend that EC be offered to women to prevent pregnancy after a sexual assault.
- A bill that merely requires emergency care facilities to provide information, a referral, or a prescription for EC, fails to ensure women's health and well-being.
- All emergency care facilities should be required to provide EC.
- An institution's religious objections to EC must not imperil a woman's access to timely and comprehensive treatment.
- **EC prevents pregnancy. It does not induce an abortion.**

Passage of a bill on this topic is long overdue, please pass this resolutions in the meantime to send a message to all health care providers that survivors of sexual assault deserve the provision of up to date and compassionate medical options at this most traumatic time.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We hope that you will do your utmost to improve the quality of care for survivors of sexual assault in Hawaii.