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Testimony in Opposition to Assembly Bill 377/Senate Bill 129
“Emergency Contraception” Hospital Mandate
Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Ethics
By Julaine K. Appling, CEO
September 6, 2007

Thank you, Chairman Gundrum and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 377 and Senate Bill 129. My name is Judith Brant, and I am reading the testimony today of Julaine Appling, president of Wisconsin Family Action, the legislative action arm of Wisconsin Family Council (formerly The Family Research Institute of Wisconsin).

Sexual assault in any form is horrific. Those of us opposed to this bill are not dismissing nor even discounting the trauma that victims of such assaults experience. We agree that they need compassionate care. However, we disagree substantially on what “compassionate care” means and includes for hospitals and hospital staff where these victims present.

Compassionate care for victims does not mean that religious and moral beliefs of hospitals and hospital workers must be dismissed or discounted. It is wrong to mandate that religiously-based hospitals or their staff provide so-called “emergency contraception” when they know this so-called “emergency contraception” can be an abortifacient.

This bill makes no provision to protect the freedom of conscience of hospitals and hospital staff and removes the protection of Wis. Stats. 253.09(1). This harsh, rigid mandate would force hospitals and their staff members who object to so-called “emergency contraception” on religious or moral grounds to violate their consciences and religious beliefs or face a draconian penalty.

Wisconsin sees itself as a progressive state. I don’t think it wants to be a leader in denying hospitals and their staff members their First Amendment freedoms and the protection of existing Wisconsin law. That happens in totalitarian societies, not here in the United States.

I urge you to vote against Assembly Bill 377/Senate Bill 129.

Thank you.