

### Public Health Committee

H.B.5303: *An Act Concerning Continuing Medical Education Requirements Concerning Endometriosis and Cultural Competency and the Creation of a Plan for an Endometriosis Data and Biorepository Program.*

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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-eight years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security, educational equity, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

CWEALF encourages the Committee to support H.B.5303: *An Act Concerning Continuing Medical Education Requirements Concerning Endometriosis and Cultural Competency and the Creation of a Plan for an Endometriosis Data and Biorepository Program.*

Endometriosis affects one in 10 women, girls, trans/non-binary individuals.<sup>1</sup> The effects of endometriosis can range from painful periods, chronic pelvic pain, chronic fatigue, dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia, to infertility.<sup>2</sup>

Endometriosis has often been referred to as the "missed disease".<sup>3</sup> Compared to other "quality of life" diseases such as Diabetes or Arthritis<sup>4</sup>, Endometriosis as a female (sexual organs) diseases has been overlooked.<sup>5</sup> Historically, women's medical issues are often neglected and viewed primarily as an issue of the women's psyche.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, endometriosis visibility, research, and funding have been little to few, which has made diagnoses, management, and treatment stagnant.<sup>7</sup>

Endometriosis is often misdiagnosed as irritable bowel syndrome and/ or an appendicitis.<sup>8</sup> On average it can take up to 10 years to receive an Endometriosis diagnosis.<sup>9</sup> The diagnosis process and treatment has not relatively changed since the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, recognition of Endometriosis is particularly problematic to women of color, who face discrimination from the health care system and have historically been treated as less reliable narrators of their pain.

<sup>1</sup> Yale Medicine. (2019, October 30). Endometriosis. Yale Medicine. from <https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/endometriosis#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20most%20common,there%20may%20be%20no%20symptoms>

<sup>2</sup> Amber et al (2020) Investigating the role of infertility in endometriosis risk,

<sup>3</sup> Hudson, N. (2021, August 13). *The missed disease? endometriosis as an example of 'undone science'*. Reproductive biomedicine & society online., from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8517707/>

<sup>4</sup> Glenza, J. (2015, September 28). *Endometriosis is often ignored as millions of American women suffer*. The Guardian. from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/27/endometriosis-ignored-federal-research-funding>

<sup>5</sup> Hudson

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Glenza

<sup>8</sup> Hudson

<sup>9</sup> Yale

<sup>10</sup> Hudson

CWEALF encourages any effort to address Endometriosis and we urge the committee to implement all of the recommendations from the Endometriosis Working Group, including increasing training for medical professionals and school nurses, improving access to medical care for endometriosis and fertility preservation and providing education for students. The Working Group also recommends better data collection and resources to better understand Endometriosis, with particular attention paid to systemic racism, explicit and implicit bias, microaggressions, racial disparities, anti-blackness, and experiences of transgender & gender diverse youth.<sup>11</sup>

House Bill No. 5303 is an important step forward in understanding, addressing and raising awareness of Endometriosis. We urge the Committee and lawmakers to advance H.B. 5303 this session.

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<sup>11</sup> Connecticut's Endometriosis Working Group (2022) *Endometriosis Working Group Recommendations*.