

## **Support HB 5146**

**Testimony for Public Hearing  
Committee on Public Health  
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### **HB 5416 AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS**

Representative Steinberg, Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Lauren Gray and I live in Bridgeport, CT. I testify in strong support of H.B. 5416 An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

I have personally been to a CPC and affected by a CPC. Here's my story.

A few years ago in college, I found out I was unexpectedly pregnant and I felt so scared and shocked and honestly didn't know what to do. I didn't know who I should tell or talk to and I was very fearful. It was not the best of times for me and I wasn't in a good relationship at all. I didn't know anything about being pregnant and honestly had no clue where to go for help.

SO I did what most millennial women do, I did a google search for pregnancy help nearby. I knew the Planned Parenthood was over an hour away from my college and on a minimal college budget, that was expensive to travel back and forth to Planned Parenthood.

What I did find was a "pregnancy help center" very close to my campus. I felt relieved. I felt like I would have some answers and begin to formulate an idea of what to do and what would be involved, though I was 90% sure I wanted an abortion, but I genuinely didn't even know what that would look like. I was looking for information about all of my options.

I made my appointment and drove over to the center where I walked in, checked in and sat down in the waiting room. I was still in shock and didn't immediately notice my surroundings. An "abortion education video" with graphic and bloody images was playing in the background and pamphlets about raising a baby were on the table. When we walked back for my appointment, they asked how far along I was and I wasn't very far so they told me I still had a lot of options and

time. I asked them to explain all the options, and how abortion worked, and then they actually said to me "this is a pro-life facility and we only discuss keeping the baby and adoption services and we will help you make one of these two options." Immediately that raised red flags. I needed help. I was scared and I wanted to talk about all the options and learn about abortion. I felt so confused and asked why they wouldn't talk to me about abortion and they again said it was a pro-life facility operating under the belief all life is sacred.

I knew that was wrong and I was being fooled. I had other choices and I refused to allow anyone to make my choice for me. I had gone seeking help in a state of terror and confusion. I thought I could get the information and medical care I needed. After all, they were called a pregnancy help center. I honestly felt shocked that a facility would do this to me. I have no idea how many other women went through this, walking through those same doors, but I did vow to talk about it and spread my message.

I don't want any other woman going through what I went through. I don't want any woman to feel that confusion and sadness and pain over the mixed messages that were given to me by the crisis pregnancy center, so that is why I'm here choosing to speak out tonight. When other women are facing stressful and difficult decisions about an unplanned pregnancy like I was, I hope that they are able to find the help that they need.

**Women deserve honest information when they are seeking help. These fake pregnancy help centers are posing as medical facilities, which they are not.**

It is hard to see the difference between a real medical facility and one of these crisis pregnancy centers, especially when they are so close to a real medical center. I actually confused the two in Hartford and ended up walking into the fake center named the "Women's Health Center" instead of the Hartford GYN Center the first time I went to the building.

IN FACT, when I testified in Hartford for the ordinance and was talking \*to one of the clinic workers\* she said to me word for word, **"Didn't know you the difference when you walked in?"**

**WHY should women have to be able to tell a difference when they are seeking help?**

When women are seeking a clinic and medical help, we should be able to find one without any confusion or deception. This bill is about "Truthfulness\* and honesty and transparency in advertising.

This is a threat to public health in our state when people are being deceived, delayed, or blocked in finding the reproductive healthcare they are seeking.

In conclusion, I strongly support H.B. 5416 to limit the deceptive advertising practices of crisis pregnancy centers in our state. No matter your personal feelings on abortion or women's healthcare services, I think we can all agree that no one should be deceived or misled when seeking healthcare. People in our state deserve honesty, and I urge the committee to move forward with H.B. 5416.

Thank you for your time.

Lauren Gray