

**Testimony of Susan L Yolen, Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy,
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
on HB 5148 An Act Concerning Pregnancy and Living Wills
Public Health Committee, March 20, 2018**

Senators Gerratana and Somers and Representative Steinberg, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 5148, An Act Concerning Pregnancy and Living Wills. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England is the largest provider of reproductive health care and family planning in Connecticut, serving about 65,000 patients annually at seventeen health centers across the state.

A living will, coupled with candid conversation with loved ones, is an important, necessary document that allows any adult to prepare for the unlikely but possible event of serious injury or brain death. Our state's living will statute was adopted over thirty years ago.

The provisions included in HB 5148 would simply offer an individual creating a living will to identify those medical interventions that are desired *in the event of a pregnancy*, identifying the range of life-prolonging treatments that should be permitted in the event that serious illness or a tragic injury makes survival unlikely or impossible. Planned Parenthood supports this long overdue change to our state's living will statute because, as the law exists, the carve-out preventing a pregnant woman from exercising her right to the protection of a living will is both vague and discriminatory.

The language in HB 5148 will encourage important, necessary conversations among family and medical providers, before any need arises. Honesty and openness around these important values will insure confidence and comfort for women and their families, and is vitally important guidance for their physicians.

In discussing this issue with legislators, advocates, medical professionals and others, the universal reaction upon learning that Connecticut does not allow a pregnant person to utilize a living will is incredulity, even shock, that this sort of discrimination would be our state's approach. Even worse, the statute is badly understood among medical professionals, several of whom you will hear from today.

There are several documented cases of situations in other states, where, lacking the documentation of a living will, a pregnant young woman, declared to be brain dead, was kept on life support for months against the wishes of her husband and family.

In a recent poll of likely Connecticut voters, 77% of those polled expressed support for a law that would allow pregnant women, like all other adult citizens of our state, to create a living will, and that the wishes of pregnant women and their families should be prioritized and honored by medical providers in the relatively rare situation where a pregnancy and a life-threatening medical condition converge.

Planned Parenthood urges the committee and the General Assembly to correct this discriminatory policy by passing HB 5148. Thank you.