



# ACTION

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Dear Chairwoman Gerratana, Chairman Steinberg, Chairwoman Somers and members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Christina Bennett and I'm the Communications Director for the Family Institute of Connecticut. Prior to working for FIC I served as the Client Services Manager for a Connecticut Pregnancy Resource Center, the ABC Women's Center. ABC Women's Center offers a range of free services for women and families including: pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, options counseling, parenting education, material resources, sexual risk education and post-abortive counsel.

The ABC Women's Center has existed as a valued part of the Middlesex County community for over 27 years. Many clients come to ABC Women's Center because of positive referrals from their family and friends. In addition during my time there I often received referrals from social service organizations such as DCF, domestic violence shelters, homes for mothers and community health centers among others.

This letter serves to voice my strong opposition to raised bill *No.5416- An an act concerning deceptive advertising practices of limited services pregnancy centers*. This bill is highly problematic and should not be passed. Here are some reasons I urge you to oppose this bill.

**1- There is not enough substantial evidence that clients seeking services at CT Pregnancy centers have been or are currently being deceived by their advertising.**

Pregnancy Centers in CT serve thousands of women yearly. Many of these centers have existed for 20-30 years in CT cities. If a bill is to be passed penalizing pregnancy centers there should be strong, solid evidence supporting these claims of deception. Where are the specific statements raised against centers for false advertising? Where are the documents from clients who've suffered because of a specific deceptive ad? NARAL Pro-Choice CT, an abortion rights organization that is pushing this bill has two or three anonymous stories on their 'Expose pregnancy center' site, [www.exposecpcsct.org](http://www.exposecpcsct.org). Those stories don't even name a specific center.

This bill raises serious accusations and there is little to no proof to back them up. Since PRC's are accustomed to false attacks from pro-abortion rights groups they've instated high standards to protect themselves. PRCS have exit forms in which all clients served privately rate the center and share their level of satisfaction with the quality of service they received. In my four years serving at a PRC I can say with documented proof that over 97% of of clients served were highly satisfied. Multiple pregnancy centers have hundreds of signed documents from clients who've raved about their services. The pregnancy centers have proof of their good work but it's not being taken into consideration from those pursuing this legislation.

**2- The bill offers no specifics on what language is considered deceptive yet it forces pregnancy centers to pay for 'corrective advertising' if their ads are deemed deceptive.**

The ads used by Pregnancy centers are often simple messages intended to aid a women making a pregnancy decision. Take for example a sentence like 'Pregnant, Need help? In an image on NARAL Pro-Choice CT's Expose GPC's website they show a bus with a Birthright ad reading, 'Pregnant, Need Help?' Next to it NARAL Pro-Choice CT wrote, 'Stop lies! No one should be allowed to trick women.' Birthright offers pregnancy aid for women and their ad expresses that. If Bill 5416 penalized false advertising, how is a center to know what's deemed false? Who determines which words are deceptive and by what standard is that determined? Are we to really believe this law is about aiding women when there's no specific clear expectations given as to what counts as false advertising? This bill can punish centers who participate in "false adverting" by forcing them to pay for 'corrective advertising.'

PRCS are not government funded organizations. They raise support from community donors, local faith based organizations among others. Is it fair for them to be put in the dark as to what constitutes 'deceptive advertising', punished if they unknowingly use language that pro-choice groups and activists deem harmful and then forced to use their donors funds to correct that? This is pushing those with pro-life views to have their resources approved by those influenced by pro-choice activists who are completely opposed to their viewpoints and aggressively attack their work.

**3-The bill denies the fact that PRCS already make it clear they don't perform or refer for abortions.**

Speaking on behalf of ABC Women's center I will state that it's clearly listed on the center's website that they do not refer or perform abortions. It is also written on the intake forms that clients fill out before receiving services. It's also written on documents and hand outs. If a client calls into the center inquiring about services she or he is told that abortions are not performed and referrals are not provided. If a client walks into the center seeking an abortion she is told at the front desk that the center does not perform abortions. I've worked with multiple clients who've chosen to terminate a pregnancy. Those clients came to us for a pregnancy test, options counseling or an ultrasound. After deciding they wanted to have an abortion they went to their local OBGYN or Planned Parenthood. In other situations a client may visit Planned Parenthood to take a pregnancy center and then come to a pregnancy center after she decides to parent. Clients are informed of what PRC's do and don't provide for services. They know where to go to find the services PRC's don't provide.

**4- This bill assumes that pregnant women and their partners seeking information on making a pregnancy decision are not interested in other options and abortion alternatives.**

Pro-abortion rights groups paint every pregnant women entering a PRC as someone who wants an abortion and is hindered by PRCS from attaining one. Many women call PRCS inquiring about their services because they are pregnant and want help processing their decision. They have options in regards to seeking care but they come to pregnancy centers because of the quality service that's provided. I've met a number of women who've felt pressured by loved ones, teachers and partners to have an abortion. These women don't feel

comfortable discussing that with an organization that is in the business of selling abortions. Women who don't want to abort but lack support from those in their life, often seek help from pregnancy centers because they know centers have nothing to financially gain from their decision.

**5- This bill is part of a larger nationwide campaign by pro-choice organizations to discredit the work of pregnancy centers who they view as competitors.**

Over the past few years pro-abortion rights groups like NARAL Pro-Choice CT have waged a war on Pregnancy Resource Centers. PRC leaders have seen fake reviews posted on their social media sites, protests outside their centers and spies sent into the center to pose as clients. NARAL Pro-Choice and the Hartford GYN abortion clinic continually post accusations against pregnancy centers on their websites. It's fine for pro-choice individuals and organizations to have different opinions on abortion. It's not okay for pro-abortion rights groups and pro-choice politicians to demonize the legitimate work of pregnancy centers.

The accusations against CT Pregnancy centers should be thoroughly investigated. When they are investigated the centers will be shown to offer quality and needed support to low income women and families in our state.

Thank you for your time.

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