

Members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Julianna Bennett, and I am here to oppose HB 5416, an Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers. This bill is assuming that these pregnancy centers engage in deceptive and misleading advertising. Hope Pregnancy Center in Cheshire is one center I know well, and they do not use any kind of deceptive or misleading advertisement. This bill is seeking to punish pregnancy centers for something they don't do.

Unfortunately, there are people and organizations nationwide that are attempting to discredit the work of pregnancy centers because they disagree with the core beliefs of these centers. I believe this bill falls into that category, and if these efforts are successful, many women stand to lose a vital means of support.

Last year, the state of Connecticut was four months overdue with the state budget. In that same year, the eleven crisis pregnancy centers which are part of the Connecticut Coalition of Pregnancy Centers provided just under 1.5 million dollars worth of services free of charge to over 3,000 clients. None of these centers receive a penny's worth of funding from the government, so not only are they providing vital services, but they are saving the government money at the same time. The Coalition is comprised of less than half of the crisis pregnancy centers in Connecticut, so it stands to reason that the clients served and services provided are at least double that amount.

Crisis pregnancy centers clearly list on their websites and in their pamphlets what services they provide and what they do not. The staff and volunteers at places like Hope Pregnancy Center have a genuine love and concern for women in crisis pregnancies. Their sincerity and desire to serve women in need also motivates them to be honest in their advertising as well as to provide accurate information and alternatives so women can receive love, support, and an opportunity to make a wise decision.

I believe HB 5416 will quickly become a hindrance to the work of crisis pregnancy centers in Connecticut, and will diminish a true asset to our state and to the women these centers serve.

I urge you to oppose and reject HB 5416.