

TESTIMONY REGARDING CARENET PRC OF SECT:

My name is Matthew Bertels and I am a New London resident. I am here to provide testimony regarding the CareNet Pregnancy Resource Center of South Eastern Connecticut (Care Net SECT). I have extensive personal first-hand experience with this Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC). I find the proposed bill (HB 5416) is an unnecessary waste of government time and money. This bill, after the California bill is struck down by the Supreme Court, will then have to be fought against the precedent that will be set. This bill is against the establishment clause of the First Amendment in that the government is attempting to impose sanctions against a non-profit organization, forcing them to go against their religious convictions. This is a clear-cut case of the first amendment being violated, and the California bill of the same will be struck down in the highest court in the land.

I have worked with CareNet of SECT on various occasions as a religious leader in the area since February 2009. My time at CareNet has opened my eyes to the struggle of women in inner city areas where the father is largely absent from the life of the child. Statistically speaking this brings on great issues later in the child's life, however, many children brought up by single mothers have gone on to accomplish great things. "WE DO NOT PERFORM OR REFER FOR ABORTION" is what the sign in each of these pregnancy resource centers should read. This will show that there is no chance that going to CareNet can ever be thought of in the light of "maybe I can get a referral for an abortion here." In no way should the non-profit organization that does not collect money from the government be forced to advocate for a government agency that performs actions such as abortion.

The women that work at CareNet SECT are the most caring, compassionate and loving people I have encountered. They are just the person a hurting, scared and lonely woman needs to encounter in their time of need. Further, the only people wearing medical coats at CareNet SECT are the nurses there that perform free STD testing and **offer free** ultrasounds that a woman desires to have so she can make her decision fully informed. My wife has performed as a "model" in their ultrasound under the direction of a nurse who was training other nurses what to look for in the early stages of a pregnancy, to ensure that the training of the medical personnel was at its highest level. Those who were working with and for CareNet were even recommended to complete basic counseling courses through the AACC, to ensure that the counselors were not providing false or bad information. This shows the care for right information that CareNet has, and shows further why this bill has no foothold in the truth.

I assert with vigor that this bill is a slanderous unconstitutional attack on pregnancy centers, targeting them specifically. I urge you to please vote "No" on HB 5416. By voting "No" you are ensuring a woman can choose and have access to a broader range of services that help her with **her** personal decision. If these centers are truly guilty of false advertising, why not take legal action because of the statute that exists already? (see Connecticut Regulation 42-110b-18). This has not been done because what PRC's are doing is perfectly legal, honest, right, helpful and essential to a hurting community. Please do not cut off the branch so many women are sitting on in my community.

Respectfully

Matthew Bertels