

## TESTIMONY REGARDING CARENET PRC OF SECT:

My name is Rachael Bertels and I am a New London resident (23 Colman Street). 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) deplorable, not because of its supposed intention of upholding honesty in advertising (because there is already legislation that demands that!) but because it is 1. Targeting a specific group and 2. slandering that said group. The allegations against this pregnancy center and others abroad (I have also had personal contact with the ABC Women's center in Middletown, CT) are unfounded and if this bill is upheld it is a constitutional violation that will be fought with my personal time and money.

With all the above stated, I worked for CareNet of SECT from February 2009 to May 2014. My time at CareNet opened my eyes to the plight of single women regarding the issue of pregnancy and have witnessed first hand the honest, open and completely upfront services CareNet offered hurting women. When I was trained, we were instructed to give out a form, which stated in capital letters "WE DO NOT PREFORM OR REFER FOR ABORTION". When I answered the phone, we were told (in cases regarding abortion, not material help which is something else offered to clients completely free!) to state plainly "We do not preform or refer for abortion, do you still want to make an appointment for a pregnancy test?" Most of the time the woman would answer "yes" although some women opted to not come in, which was their choice.

I was drawn to CareNet in 2009 and was brought through a Post Abortion group to help me heal from the aftermath from my abortion, which bothered me from age 16 to 24. I was in Navy Bootcamp and out of nowhere was tormented by my decision to abort. When I went through this group CareNet offered, it brought tremendous relief and for the first time I could face my decision to abort without crippling anguish. There is no where else in society for a woman to go to walk through the grief process regarding abortion, if you unfairly and slanderously limit these centers, you will be limiting a woman's freedom to access help for emotional trauma she may feel due to 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 preform free STD testing and **offer free** ultrasounds that a woman desires to have so she can make her decision fully informed. The executive Director at CareNet does not parade around in a medical coat, although she is a licensed therapist! 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.  
-Rachael Bertels 860-405-4999