

**Testimony for Public Hearing
Committee on Public Health
March 20, 2018**

**YWCA Hartford Region
135 Broad Street
Hartford, CT 06105**

**HB 5416 AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES
PREGNANCY CENTERS**

Representative Steinberg, Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Ren Brockmeyer and I am the Director of Programming at the YWCA Hartford Region. I testify in strong support of H.B. 5416 An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

The YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. Passing House Bill 5416 is an important step in ensuring this mission is codified in Connecticut state law. This bill is not a controversial pro-life versus pro-choice issue, but rather a pivotal step to ensure transparency and honesty in healthcare advertising.

Among many other tactics, Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) take out keyword-based advertising campaigns on search engines and bid on keywords such as “women’s health clinic.” Women click on the ads believing they’re getting information about legitimate health clinics, but instead they’re taken to the websites of CPCs, which are not health clinics, but rather nonprofit organizations that provide counseling and other non-medical services. CPCs are often staffed by volunteers who dress in white lab coats and require clients fill out forms, replicating the look and feel of a doctor’s office. Instead, they provide scientifically unfounded information to convince women not to get abortions, use birth control, or engage in sexual activity.

If passed, HB 5416 will prevent CPCs from deceitfully advertising themselves as abortion clinics, medical facilities, or providing other false information in advertisements.

False advertisements by CPCs disproportionately affect low income communities and communities of color. Access to reproductive healthcare and economic outcomes are indistinguishably linked, so creating confusion and deception in already disadvantaged communities only worsens these inequalities.

In an attempt to lure in women who are “at risk for abortion” CPCs intentionally locate in low-income communities and communities of color: underserved populations that already face barriers to healthcare. Members of these communities frequently lack the means to take time off of work for fear of losing their job, and cannot afford to travel or take public transit. When CPCs provide individuals with false information, they may need to take additional time off from work, or spend more money on travel in order to find the care they need. When CPCs provide false information in low-income communities, it can be financially devastating. The current state of

CPC advertising is, therefore, not only a threat to public health, but a threat to the financial stability of entire communities.

CPCs have every right to provide services. However, those services must be clear to its users. When people are deceived, or their healthcare is delayed or prevented, it is a threat to public health. This is true in all forms of healthcare. H.B. 5416 does not limit, in any way, which services CPCs can provide. It simply ensures their advertising provides women with accurate information.

For the reasons stated above, I strongly support H.B. 5416 to limit the deceptive advertising practices of crisis pregnancy centers in our state. I urge the committee to move forward with H.B. 5416.

Thank you for your time,
Ren Brockmeyer