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Testimony on
H.B. 5416 "An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers"
Before the Public Health Committee
March 20, 2018

My name is Jaime Brown and I currently work as the Fundraising Coordinator for ABC Women's Center, a pregnancy support center in Middletown. Prior to working in my role as a staff member of this organization, I served for years as a volunteer. As a volunteer of this incredible organization, I was privileged to work directly with the clients that benefit from the free vital services this pregnancy center offers. ABC serves hundreds of families each year, offering them a variety of support services such as parenting education classes and material assistance. In addition to the family support services, this center also provides pregnancy tests and limited obstetric ultrasounds, again all free of charge to our communities. This center operates under the license of a medical doctor, Daniel O'Neil MD, who reviews every ultrasound which are conducted by licensed sonographers. In addition to the vast array of services provided in house, ABC also works closely with local social service organizations giving and receiving of referrals to better care for families in our community. ABC Women's Center is just 1 of 24 pregnancy centers offering these types of free services all across our state.

The bill being presented has been created due to claims made by abortion advocacy groups, such as NARAL. NARAL has not had any firsthand experience with these centers and does not offer any substantial evidence against them. In fact, the 99% satisfaction rate received from our clients actually paint a very different picture. This 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. It would, in essence, put abortionist activists in charge of deciding what is acceptable advertising for these life affirming organizations. This bill claims that these centers falsely advertise for services that they do not offer such as abortion. Pregnancy support centers do not refer for or provide abortions and they make this very clear in all of their written and verbal advertising. Many women find these centers by way of their websites which clearly states that abortions and abortion referrals are not offered at these centers. The clients who come in understand that they will not be receiving abortion services at these places and yet they still choose to come to these centers due to the array of free services offered.

I personally oversee the fundraising of ABC so I am privileged to understand the level of support we have from various businesses, organizations, churches and individuals in our state. ABC has existed for nearly 30 years solely funded by donations. This bill will continue to receive great levels of opposition from the thousands of supporters of this work and it will result in a financial burden for the state. I would advise those on this committee to meet first hand with the centers of which these allegations are made instead of taking NARAL's word for an issue they are extremely uninformed on. Please do not infringe upon these organizations freedom of speech and freedom of religion by passing this bill.

Sincerely,

Jaime Brown
Fundraising Coordinator
ABC Women's Center