

**Testimony for Public Hearing  
Committee on Public Health  
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**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 Dr. Victoria Cassano and I live in Hartford. I am board certified in a Preventive Medicine Specialty and I am testifying in strong support of H.B. 5416 An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers. As a public health advocate, I believe this bill is vital to maintaining appropriate care of a pregnant woman regardless of whether she seeks to terminate a pregnancy or not. I wish to discuss the real harm to public health that these centers represent. First, I would like to state that these "Clinics" are not limited service pregnancy centers. They are not medical clinics, they have no medical staff competent to diagnose or treat any condition including those related to pregnancy. It is a well known fact that these outlets misguide and mislead vulnerable women with false information and a false sense of well-being about their pregnancies.

First, these centers are staffed with volunteers without medical training and cannot determine or assist a woman who may be ill or whose pregnancy is in distress. This leads to unnecessary morbidity and mortality of both the mother and the fetus. Abortion in the first trimester constitutes 92% of all abortions, do not increase the risk of secondary infertility. Carrying an unsafe pregnancy to term, without appropriate pre-natal care is far more likely to result in subsequent infertility. Contrary to the above the risk of carrying an unintended pregnancy to term, when the mother has neither the physical, emotional, or financial needs to properly care for the pregnancy and resulting child. Information about risk factors for deleterious outcomes to pregnancy such as cigarette smoking and alcohol and drug ingestion are neither discussed nor treated, leading to greater mortality in both the late term fetus and the newborn. Not testing for STDs in the mother can lead to serious outcomes in the child, such as neonatal syphilis and the transmission of Hepatitis B and C to the infant.

These centers inform women that Abortion increases the risk of breast cancer. This too is a falsehood. This was studied extensively by the National Cancer institute in 2003. They also state that it has a deleterious effect on long term mental health, also a lie, proven by scientific research that comports to all necessary ethical and scientific standards.

This misinformation is contrary to the legal and ethical standards of informed consent. If a center is posing as a clinic, then they should be held to the same level of proper informed consent before any procedure ( such as Ultrasound) is done. The fact that the ultrasound is non-diagnostic other than to determine if a fetus has a heartbeat is also deceptive.

Clinics also provide misinformation about the protections afforded against STDs with the use of condoms. This leads to an increase in serious infections and additional unwanted pregnancies in individuals already at risk for untoward health events.

It is imperative that protection of vulnerable populations, including children themselves who become pregnant, victims of rape and incest and those who engage in unsafe sexual practice are protected from falsehoods that can lead to serious health outcomes and are encouraged to receive proper counseling regarding risk factors, treatment options and medical care for their pregnancies, regarding of their reproductive decisions.