

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

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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 Christopher E. Cronkhite and I live in Plainville. I testify in strong support of H.B. 5416 An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

I began working as a clinic escort in July 2017. I'm the first volunteer to arrive most Saturday mornings and often the first friendly face patients see as they attempt to navigate the gauntlet of protesters pressuring them as they approach their reproductive healthcare provider. It's hard to imagine unless you have been there. I have seen patients who have scheduled appointments at a legitimate reproductive health clinic who find themselves confused about where to go because there is a crisis pregnancy center right next door. Now imagine yourself, under that type of stress as you approach two doors directly across from each other with extremely similar sounding names. One of those doors leads to the medical clinic you made an appointment at. Behind that door are trained and certified medical providers ready to provide you with all-options counseling and accurate medical information you need to make informed decisions. Behind the opposite door there is a faith based organization unrelated in any way to the practice you made an appointment with, but it looks a lot like a medical facility that can help you. If you are misled and walk through the wrong door you will also miss the appointment you made at the medical clinic across the way.

I understand that any organization can provide services, people should be able to easily tell from the signs and advertisements what is available at that facility. During my time as a clinic escort I have seen many many women really confused about which door to enter. Unfortunately one specific morning I was unable to direct a patient into the legitimate clinic and she instead went into the CPC. I did speak with her and her mother at length after they left that center. The patient and her mother were in obvious distress at being misled and deceived. They deserved dignity and respect and honest about the clinic they were looking for.

I see many people on Saturdays when I volunteer. Some are in more obvious distress than others. Some days the protesters are more hostile than others. Some patients want me to escort them into the building, some don't. They all have one thing in common. They deserve

dignity and respect and honesty when they come to a legitimate healthcare clinic seeking care. They deserve dignity, respect, and honesty from a limited service pregnancy center as well. It has been my experience that they do not receive that courtesy at crisis pregnancy centers, and instead are purposefully misled by signs, volunteers, and advertisements about where they should go for their medical appointments.

Every limited service pregnancy center in the State of Connecticut should be held to a standard of truth in advertising for the benefit of all patients seeking healthcare. In conclusion, I strongly support H.B. 5416 to limit the deceptive advertising practices of crisis pregnancy centers in our state. Regardless of how anyone feels about abortion or reproductive health decisions, patients deserve to know what services they are getting at any crisis pregnancy center. I hope that recounting my experience gives the committee a picture of what this deception is like. I urge the committee on public health to move forward with H.B. 5416.

Thank you for your time.
Christopher E. Cronkhite