

Written Testimony

Committee on Public Health

For Hearing: 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 Grace Damio and I live in Mansfield. My testimony is submitted on behalf of the Hispanic Health Council, in strong support of H.B. 5416 An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

The Hispanic Health Council is a statewide, community-based organization, headquartered in Hartford, and dedicated to improving the health and social well-being of Latinos and other diverse communities. The organization achieves this mission through community-based research and direct services, as well as provider training and policy advocacy.

The Hispanic Health Council has nearly 40 years of experience learning from community members about the barriers that they experience to achieving positive health, and working to address those barriers, on individual and policy levels.

One major issue of focus for the organization is health care. The Council serves tens of thousands of individuals annually, and assuring that they have access to quality health care is of utmost importance. Our community health worker staff work with clients to address barriers to securing health insurance, to enrolling in healthcare services and to using the services successfully. Our staff empower patients to be informed consumers of health care. They work with many clients who have low health literacy levels and need help understanding and navigating healthcare systems. They also advocate to providers on behalf of clients to assure that health care services are delivered clearly and respectfully.

H.B. 5416, An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services

Pregnancy Centers, is in essence intended to remove barriers to quality health care. This ordinance will set policy that requires clarity so that Hartford residents seeking quality reproductive healthcare will know exactly what is provided – and more importantly what is not provided – by crisis pregnancy center. This bill is about transparency and honesty in advertising. When someone is seeking a clinic, they should be able to find one without confusion or deception. It is a threat to public health in our state when people are being deceived, delayed, or blocked in finding the reproductive healthcare they are seeking. Regardless of anyone’s personal feelings about abortion, I think we can all agree that no one should be misled or lied to when they are seeking medical care. An ordinance that facilitates informed selection of health care services can only be positive for healthcare consumers, like the Hispanic Health Council’s clients, who often find the healthcare services to be confusing.

It seems that passage of H.B. 5416 is common sense, as it can only facilitate better access for better informed healthcare consumers. In conclusion, 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 attention to this important matter and for your consideration of my testimony.