

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

**Zoya Dhakam
29 Temple Street
Hartford, CT 06103**

H.B. 5416, AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS

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

My name is Zoya Dhakam *and I live in Hartford, Connecticut.* I testify in support of H.B. 5416, ***AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS.***

Advertising; using media outlets to convey the message of the status quo, shapes mass opinions and decisions. The choice of pregnancy, sadly is one that too is being manipulated by the use of deceptive advertisements.

We all know that we end up believing, at least 80%, of what it shown on media. This includes messages about pregnancy centers and the services provided to the public. If the underlying message of an advertisement conveys the idea of limited centers, unhygienic/ unsanitary equipment, poor medical practices/ malpractice, etc, it is unlikely that women would consider availing any services at pregnancy centers. At the same time, institutions may use advertising to deceive its audience into believing in the quality of services at pregnancy centers. When the centers are actually a threat to a woman's life. Pregnancy centers may easily leave out basic facts, such as the varied risks of pregnancy during the three trimesters, or prenatal health conditions that may be a threat to a woman's life if she chooses to undergo/not undergo abortion.

Medical tests and reports are important when making life decisions. All decisions can not be based on intuition or emotional judgement. Some CPCs are guided solely by passion and lobbyists' agenda, that they leave out the truth behind emergency pregnancy decisions. These CPCs present themselves as best suited to make decisions for females, who visit the centers in a state of emergency and can not really make a sound decision in a flustered state of mind, specially when CPC's are misguiding and manipulating them. The CPCs will pose as experienced medical centers that are surgically and medically equipped to make pregnancy decisions. CPCs do not provide or refer for abortion care, emergency contraception, or birth control, but often try to falsely present themselves as comprehensive reproductive healthcare clinics. And Advertising equipment like flyer, pamphlets, video messages, etc are used to support their claim and their ideology only.

Considering the intensity and consequences of false advertising by CPC's, I feel that it is important that advertising agency regulate the messages conveyed by these centers. The City's media department should approve the advertisement, after conducting an investigation into the real practices of a CPC. CPC activities should be regulated by the local government, and advertisements should be under strict scrutiny. If a CPC is conveying false messages and malpractices, the City should enforce consequences to ensure such activities are curbed. As well as that innocent female lives are not endangered by deceptive advertising.

I want to close by thanking the members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee for hearing my testimony today.

I also want to voice my support for HB 5148, also known as the Living Will Bill, which would protect a pregnant woman's right to a living will.