

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

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New Haven, Connecticut

Testimony in support of H.B. 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 Sarah Ganong and I live in New Haven. I testify in strong support of H.B. 5416 An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers. I'm testifying today in my capacity as the political director of the Connecticut Working Families Organization, a 501c4 non-profit dedicated to racial, social, and economic justice in Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

House Bill 5416 is a bill about transparency and honesty. When women are seeking healthcare, they must be able to find it without any confusion or deception. As a resident of New Haven, I'm concerned for the women and families in my community. Any organization can provide services to pregnant women, but it absolutely must be immediately clear what those services are, and what they aren't. Otherwise, our state's public health is compromised when our women and families are being deceived, delayed, or blocked from finding the reproductive healthcare they are seeking. Regardless of anyone's personal feelings about abortion, we can all agree that no one should be misled or even lied to when they are seeking medical care.

My organization, Connecticut Working Families, advocates on behalf of Connecticut residents in support of policies that affect our most vulnerable populations. These limited service pregnancy centers often locate in low-income communities and in communities of color, thus taking advantage of some of our most vulnerable women and families, many of whom already have disproportionate difficulties accessing safe medical care, particularly reproductive care. These difficulties include income, lack of access to public transportation, on-call scheduling which makes scheduling medical appointments nearly impossible, and more.

When a woman is blocked from accessing reproductive healthcare, it negatively affects her economic well-being. If she's balancing an on-call schedule, or working for tips, finding and affording childcare when she goes to appointments can be difficult both logistically and financially. If she's taken a half-day off from her low-paying job, paid bus fare each way, and ends up at a crisis pregnancy center due to mis-leading advertising when she was really looking for a full slate of reproductive healthcare options, this has a negative effect on her family and her economic situation. The economic security of women and families in Connecticut is directly

tied to a women's access to reproductive healthcare. The decision to have a child impacts financial well-being, job security, workforce participation, and educational attainment.

In conclusion, I strongly support H.B. 5416 to limit the deceptive advertising practices of crisis pregnancy centers in our state. No matter personal feelings, I think we can all agree that no one should be deceived or misled when seeking healthcare. People in our state deserve honesty, and I urge the committee to move forward with H.B. 5416. Our laws must reflect the truth – that a women's reproductive health is critical to her economic health and stability, and that of her family and community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill.