

Elizabeth Gustafson
51 Fairview Terrace
Glastonbury, Connecticut 06073

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 Elizabeth Gustafson and I am from Glastonbury, Connecticut. I testify in strong support of H.B. 5416 An Act Concerning Deceptive Practices of Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

As a woman with the ability and privilege to access unbiased medical information, I am strongly concerned about the methods of Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPC's). I have access to the internet, research experience, and am now fully aware of the biased practices used by CPCs. While true, as an 18 year-old growing up in the State of Connecticut, there was a time when I was concerned that my birth-control method had failed. During summer months, I stayed on the shore of Connecticut and worked as a Lifeguard. When this occurred, I remembered seeing a place that advertised "Pregnant? Need Help?" In my case, I was relieved to find I was not pregnant, and never visited this CPC. Now knowing and seeing real evidence of their biased approach to "helping" women, I frequently ask myself... What if I went there?

Fast forward to today, where I am an MSW working in Connecticut. As a woman and a Social Worker, I strongly oppose the unethical conduct of organizations who use deceptive marketing approaches and incorrect, biased medical information to influence the decisions of those in need of reproductive health services. The dangers of providing inaccurate medical information has the potential to place women in potentially-life threatening situations (if they were not already in one). Additionally, access to resources such as computers and the internet to research medical information regarding reproductive health is not an option for many women. In this scenario, the biased practices of CPCs may be the only source of information provided, when women should be provided **all** of their options when making decisions regarding their pregnancy and health.

When it comes to women's choice, I support those who either decide to have an abortion, or choose to continue their pregnancy. It is the right of a woman to decide what is best for them in their situation, in addition to women who do not have a choice due to medical necessity. My concern is with the failure to provide women with all of their choices, and deceptive practices by CPCs to position themselves in influential position that may influence the decisions of women. By allowing CPCs to continue their unethical conduct and failing to demand full transparency on their methods, we are threatening those very freedoms and implicitly perpetrating a threat to public health.

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.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Gustafson