

Testimony on
H.B. 5416 "An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers"
Before the Public Health Committee
March 20, 2018

My name is Lynn Jaycox. I worked at the ABC Women's Center in Middletown for 20 years, most of the years as Client Services Director. I am speaking in opposition to HB 5416 and implore you to vote NO!

This bill is targeting CT pregnancy centers with inaccurate information. The bill has nothing in it that defines what is considered false, misleading or deceptive advertising nor does it acknowledge the fact that centers make it clear that they do not perform or refer for abortions.

The first thing I'd like to ask you all is if you have googled "abortion" or "pregnancy options" yourself? I did recently. This is what I found out. If a woman wants to have an abortion, she can google "abortion" and have access to 6 or 7 pages worth of sites relating strictly to abortion before finding anything about any other option. If she googles "pregnancy options", she has a few sites that point her to centers such as ours, that state that they don't do abortions or abortion referrals. They state that they empower women to explore their options and if they offer ultrasound, they have a licensed medical staff. Also under the googled title "pregnancy options", she can immediately find 3 or 4 Planned Parenthood sites and also a pregnancy options site that tells women not to go to Centers such as ours, but encourages them to go through the same workbook that is on the Planned Parenthood website. My questions to you are these... Where are you getting your information from that we are deceptive? What is false and misleading about our advertising?

The second thing I'd like to address is this: Our very existence as Centers speaks for itself!! If our centers are being so false, misleading and deceptive, then ...

1. why have we been around for 28 years
2. why do clients keep coming through our doors year after year by the 100s
3. why do clients keep bringing their friends to us
4. why are we respected in our communities and receive referrals from other agencies
5. why do you see all kinds of positive reviews on the internet
6. why hasn't there been one woman come into our Center decrying our services and stating that she wished she didn't have her baby?

The third thing I'd like to address is how we handled clients when I worked at the Center.

If a woman called and was looking for an abortion, the very first thing we would say is : " I'm sorry we don't perform or refer for abortions" . After that, we would tell her the services we did offer including a pregnancy test, information on all her options that would empower her to make an educated decision and a free ultrasound, if appropriate. She could then make an appointment or say good-bye.

If a woman came into the Center looking for a pregnancy test, she could access the same services.

In all the years I was at the Center only 2 women came into the Center specifically looking for an abortion clinic. Both of them had driven by and both said that they saw the word pregnant on the window, but didn't read any other part of our signage. The one woman inquired about an abortion and I stated that we did not perform or refer for abortions. I stated what our services were, as I did in the phone calls. She chose to leave.

The other woman, after being told that we didn't perform or refer for abortions, chose to stay. She asked if she could receive an abortion referral if she decided to abort, but I reiterated that we did not offer abortion referrals. She still chose to stay.

It should be abundantly clear to all of you by now that we do not engage in practices that are false, misleading or deceptive.

One final point I'd like to make is, that for over 5 years, I facilitated an After-Abortion Support Group for healing women who regretted their abortions. When asked what would have made a difference in the decision that they regret, they universally said "Information on fetal development and the support from someone who would stand by me, so I could have felt like having my baby was an option." This is what ABC Women's Center and the other Centers in CT do! They offer accurate information to women, empower women in their decision-making, and give support and resources when a woman who finds herself in an unplanned pregnancy situation wants to choose adoption or parenting as an option.

Thank you for letting me address all of you today. Please think carefully as you consider your decision in this extremely important matter. Your vote will have a tremendous impact on the wonderful women of Connecticut, women like the 1000's of clients who have come through our doors.

I urge you to vote NO on bill 5416!

Sincerely,

Lynn Jaycox

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