

ST GERARDS CENTER FOR LIFE  
HARTFORD WOMEN'S CENTER  
HARTFORD, CT 06114

March 18, 2018

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

Dear Chair and Committee Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Judith Mascolo, MD and I am the Board Chair and Medical Director of St. Gerard's Center for Life and Hartford Women's Center. I am writing to ask that you oppose any further consideration of raised HB 5416.

St. Gerard's is the only pregnancy resource center in Hartford and has been operating for fourteen years. Ninety percent of our staff are volunteers, including myself. I have been St. Gerard's Medical Director since 2009. I am a licensed and board certified Family Physician in private practice in West Hartford and am on the medical staff at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center.

We also have a licensed nurse practitioner and a licensed RN who volunteer their time doing limited obstetrical ultrasounds.

All of our services are free. We have never accepted money from the City, State or Federal governments.

Since its beginnings in 2009, St. Gerard's has saved several hundred babies from abortion and has helped over a thousand mothers and families from Hartford and the surrounding communities. We offer women and families hope and emotional and material support, which continues for at least two years after the baby is born. We help women continue their education, find jobs and housing. We pay our clients rent if they get behind, help them with purchasing reliable transportation and have also furnished several apartments in the city for our clients. Most women choose abortion because they find themselves in some kind of crises situation. We solve those crises so that they can choose life for their baby.

In our Jefferson St. location, we are the last option for many women before they enter the abortion clinic.

We do not deceive women into thinking that we are an abortion facility or that we provide any medical care beyond a pregnancy test and a limited obstetrical

ultrasound. These are the only medical services our Center does and only the licensed medical professionals perform them.

If a woman chooses to have an abortion, we offer her post-abortion counseling by trained volunteers for as long as she needs it.

This bill specifically addresses alleged deceptive advertising by pregnancy centers. We don't advertise, except for small cards we offer to girls entering the abortion clinic. If they refuse to take it, we walk away. We don't advertise as a medical center. We make it clear that we provide only two medical services. We don't pretend that we do abortions, and we are upfront with potential clients about this. We also tell them that we do not do any STD screenings or provide any prenatal or obstetrical care. If a client needs these services she is referred to an obstetrician.

Our opposition would have the public believe that we lie, mislead, bully and harass women who are seeking an abortion. We do none of these things. We offer women a chance to choose life for their baby by helping them through whatever crises they are in and supporting them for years to come.

Pregnancy resource centers have a place in Connecticut. Women need our services and trust what we do. Please vote No on HB 5416.

Thank you,

Judith M. Mascolo, MD