



116 Grove Street, Torrington, CT 06790

Testimony on

*H.B. 5416 "An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services
Pregnancy Centers"*

Before the Public Health Committee

March 20, 2018

Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Deacon David Reynolds, Chairman and founder of the Two Hearts Pregnancy Care Center located in Torrington Connecticut. I am here today to speak in opposition to House Bill 5416 *An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers*. This proposed bill is based on inaccurate and misleading information about pregnancy care centers in our state and is part of a national campaign to discredit the work that these centers perform. This legislation is driven more by the ideological conflicts between pro-life pregnancy centers and the organizations who support this bill concerning the value of unborn human life, than it is about false advertising.

Every pregnancy resource center operates differently and is an independent organization. I would briefly like to take this opportunity to tell you about our center. Two Hearts Pregnancy Care Center is a community based non-profit organization that services women as they find themselves facing an unplanned pregnancy, having economic difficulties providing for their newly born children or trying to leave an abusive relationship with their children. Since opening in 2012, Two Hearts has provided emotional support, parenting skills, and supplies to approximately 450 women and their children. Two Hearts has a working relationship with many social service agencies in Torrington. Two Hearts makes referrals to these organizations and they make referrals to Two Hearts. Two Hearts receives no state or federal financial aid and is funded totally by donations and fundraising activities.

Two Hearts **is not** an organization that lies to women in need or that falsely advertises it services to mislead pregnant women looking for help. Approximately 92% of the women we have serviced have come to Two Hearts based on referrals from other organizations, family members and friends. This high number of referrals shows that people in the community support and trust Two Hearts. If we practiced any of the dubious activities that proponents of this bill claim, the referral numbers would be drastically lower. Two Hearts spends almost no funds on advertising. Our center has a website, Facebook page and a pamphlet that is distributed in the community.

I mentioned earlier that this legislation is more about an ideological conflict between the pregnancy centers and the organizations who support this legislation, such as NARAL CT and Planned Parenthood. Proof of this statement can be found in Section 1(7) where *limited services pregnancy center* is defined as centers that do not provide referrals for abortions or emergency contraception. This automatically excludes any center, such as Planned Parenthood centers, from being covered by this proposed legislation because they perform or refer for abortions. Also, what constitutes false advertising is not clearly defined in this legislation. In fact, this bill appears to raise legal issues around "preferred speech" and First Amendment rights. Courts throughout the country have not ruled favorably on many other laws attempting to regulate the activities of pregnancy care centers. Laws that were promoted by the advocates of this legislation.

Two Hearts and many other centers I have interacted with do not practice misleading or deceptive advertising. Like Two Hearts, they treat the women seeking assistance with compassion and caring support. I believe that an act of true deception, with a complete lack of concern for the women we serve, is being practiced by the organizations prompting this legislation.

I urge the members of the Public Health Committee to oppose House Bill 5416.

Deacon David Reynolds
Chairman, Two Hearts Pregnancy Care Center