

Dear Members of the CT Public Health Committee,

My name is Cathy Shemeth. I am a Registered Nurse Licensed in the State of Connecticut for 27 years. I have worked in Critical Care, Burn, Telemetry, Labor & Delivery and PostPartum Nursing. I also serve on the Board of the ABC Center Pregnancy Resource Center in Middletown, CT.

In the 27 years that I have had relationship with the ABC center and other Pregnancy Resource Centers (PRCs), I have never witnessed any Pregnancy Resource Center in Connecticut use deceptive advertising, propaganda, shaming, lying, or forcing of their agenda upon those clients who use their services. What I have seen is hundreds of CT residents given absolutely free pregnancy services that provide pregnancy and STI testing, sonograms, prenatal and postpartum care, free baby clothes, diaper and supplies, parenting classes and education.

In fact, last year, a single young lady here in CT, whose family are close friends of ours was horribly raped and became pregnant. She was confused, angry, financially unstable and afraid. We surrounded her with love and support, wanting desperately to protect her from shame, deceit, depression and heartache. She made the decision to go to the ABC Center in Middletown to get information on options. What she found there was free care and counsel and compassion.

They accurately presented information on pregnancy, abortion, childbirth and future education opportunities for parenting if needed. They carefully supported her right to make her own choice and did not coerce or force her into any decision. She left her two appointments at this PRC feeling empowered, enlightened and encouraged that she would make the best informed choice and decision for her pregnancy.

Her experience, and the personal experiences of thousands of other women, validate the fact that PCRs offer a much needed resource and compliment to CT society.

As a result... I am speaking in opposition to H.B. 5416. This bill aims to suggest that Pregnancy Resource Centers use deceptive advertising practices. There is absolutely no evidence in the 27 years I have been involved with Connecticut PRCs that I have ever witnessed any deception in practice or advertising. As a nurse, I value medical excellence and expertise and I can validate that I have only witnessed the utmost care and concern by PRCs in CT in empowering pregnant women to make personal decisions based on truth. PRCs that are committed to the guidelines organized by the Connecticut Pregnancy Care Coalition and are members of this group commit to operate with truthfulness and respect.

Respectfully, I remind you that Connecticut already has legislation in place called the "Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA) 42-110 which already prohibits, among many other things, unfair and deceptive advertising. My son is attending New York Law School in Manhattan and this past summer worked with the CT Assistant Attorney General, Jeremy Pearlman, of Consumer Protection. As a result, my son is very familiar with this Act and how it protects CT residents against deceptive advertising. He worked hard this past summer on cases to protect consumers in CT. This legislation is already in place if there is concern, and as a result, there is absolutely no need for this bill.

If pregnant women and their partners go to a PRC, they will find a powerful and free resource for making decisions as well as continued support, financial help and education for the future. These establishments make our state stronger. I have called Planned Parenthood to request prenatal and or postpartum care for individuals. They advertise on their website that some of their facilities provide this care. What I found out is that they do not. They only make a referral to another establishment for these services. If this is the case, why don't they refer their clients that need and want prenatal and postpartum care to Pregnancy Resource Centers... especially since these services are free to the individual and to the state?

I lived the first 18 years of my life in Tokyo, Japan. In 1948, Japan legalized abortion as part of an Eugenic Protection Law, (24 years before Roe vs Wade). Today, 50% of Japanese women that have had abortions (and the average woman has had 3-4) testify that they felt they had no choice except to have an abortion because there was the lack of information and support during their crisis pregnancy. Because of an alarming decrease in population because the high number of abortions, it is projected that the Japanese nation will literally become extinct as we know it to be. It is also projected that by the year of 2060, 40% of Japan's population will be over the age of 65. This will put a heavy burden on the younger class who will be unable to carry the financial burden to care for their elderly. The reason I remind us of this well documented case in Japan is that the long term ramifications of the issues we face here in CT and the US in relation to pregnancy choice and options are much bigger than we may see in our own limited time frame. To give a woman who is pregnant supportive and complete information so she can make a choice herself is a human right Pregnancy Resource Centers uphold.

We need to recognize that the battle that this bill digs up is not only unnecessary but also not based on truth. It's purpose is to uncover deception... when it's very foundation is based on inaccurate facts. Pregnancy Resource Centers and the Connecticut Pregnancy Care Coalition communicate truthfully, accurately, honestly, and carefully to represent their services to clients.

As Members of our Public Health Committee, I ask you to recognize that our state receives great benefit now and for the future health and strength of our

state by the supportive care administered by Pregnancy Resource Centers. I respectfully ask you to vote against HB-5416 "An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers." It discriminates against our constitutional rights of free speech. And it also is unnecessary as CT already has the "CT Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA Act)" in place to protect against any issues of concern.