



180 East Main St. Middletown, CT 06457
(860) 704-0078 www.abcwomenscenter.org

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 Paula Sorrells-Beene. I am testifying in opposition to H.B. 5416. I currently serve as a Board Member for the ABC Women's Center in Middletown. Prior to serving on the board, I worked as a consultant to the Executive Director of ABC.

My question to you today is "What are the choices for a pregnant woman in crisis?"

- Keep the child
- Put the child up for adoption
- Abort the child

PRCs help women and couples who choose to keep their child by providing education for moms and dads as well as necessary items for the first two years of the child's life.

PRCs provide information about adoption agencies to the pregnant woman or couple.

PRCs do not take away choices, they simply do not perform abortions nor do they encourage them. However, in no way do they restrict women or couples from pursuing abortion.

There is a reason women come to Pregnancy Resource Centers. The women are treated with respect. The women trust the client advocates that assist them. The Pregnancy Resource Centers have earned their trust.

Pregnancy Resource Centers are all about choice. True, they do not perform abortions nor do they encourage them, but they do respect the woman and her choice concerning how she wants to handle her pregnancy.

If PRCs are fined or if their freedom to assist pregnant women and their spouses and partners is taken away, many women will have no support in their decision to keep the child or put the child up for adoption. A woman's choice is cut by two-thirds.

PRCs offer free services:

- Free pregnancy tests
- Free STI tests
- Free sonograms
- Free education

PRCs provide services for women in the first two years of her child's birth including:

- Clothing
- Blankets
- Car seats
- Educational and other material support

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All at no cost to the woman or couple.

These false accusations are, first of all, false. And secondly, they are not in the best interest of pregnant women or the state of Connecticut. Voting Yes to this bill would place unnecessary financial and emotional burdens on women in crisis. It also places unnecessary financial burdens on our state.

In truth, voting Yes on this bill is penalizing an organization for providing a pregnant woman or couple with choices.

In truth, voting Yes on this bill is restricting a woman's choice by taking away free services that give her information to help her make a choice.

In truth, voting yes on this bill is actually taking away choice for pregnant women and their spouse or partner.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Sorrells-Beene
ABC Women's Center
Board of Directors

I submitted the above testimony on March 19, 2018, that provided legislators information about how I feel concerning H.B. 5416.

I would like to clarify my position on why I oppose the bill.

- Requiring pregnancy services centers to provide referrals to clients for abortions or emergency contraception without a reciprocal notification at locations that provide abortions or emergency contraception treats abortions and emergency contraception preferentially. Reciprocal notification means abortion providers would provide referrals to pregnancy services centers to women who choose to keep their babies.
- Such preferential treatment elevates a single choice while denigrating other options unfairly.
- Such preferential treatment can only reduce a woman's choice or access to other options.

Of course it is unfair to use deceptive advertising or misleading information when dealing with women who are stressed and having difficulty deciding what to do.

I believe that pregnancy services centers/pregnancy resource centers should clearly identify that they are not a full-service medical facility but that they are established to help encourage, support, and provide limited medical information and services to aid in their decision regarding their pregnancy.

As duly elected officials, I hope you will recognize that our state receives enormous benefit from 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."