

To whom it may concern:

My name is Matthew Bertels, and I am the pastor of Veritas Community Church in New London, CT. I am writing today in opposition to Senate Bill 835 AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS. This bill is laden with problems and does not even muster the ability to be cogent, let alone being unbiased in its over-reach towards the citizens that this bill will impact. Within all logical structures it is important to begin the logical analysis with a review of the definitions of the words that are to be used in the course of the discussion. This is where this bill begins with its flaws.

The first word that is defined in this does not meet the muster of a scientific discussion with regards to what an abortion is. To better understand what an abortion is, it helps to see what the opposing points of view are regarding this. The definition provided states, "the termination of a pregnancy for purposes other than producing a live birth." This means that one needs to further break down this term to understand what it means. The word termination means "the action of bringing something to an end." This means that this something needs to be defined. The something here is the fetus or embryo. There are various viewpoints regarding what these are, so this means that these definitions must be clarified. The embryo is the part of the life cycle that begins just after fertilization and continues through the formation of body structures, such as tissues and organs. This means that the term for life must be established. The seven signs of life are moving, respiration, sensitivity, growth, reproduction, excretion and nutrition. All of these activities are present in living organisms. The embryo is undergoing each of these. The embryo also has its own unique human DNA. So, the scientific definition of abortion is "the bringing the end of a living human in its early stages of development with a unique DNA map for the purpose of other than live birth." This word is also not used in sections two or three of the bill in accordance with what the purpose of defining the word is stated as being in the parenthetical portion of section one.

Within section two there is also a question of what one declares as being a pregnancy related service. This seems to insinuate that there are options which will not be spelled out, but for which the pregnancy centers will be held accountable. This seems to be not only unclear, but even deceptive in its wording to be able to change the heart of the law at the whim and pleasure of the legislators. This restrictive language does not meet any realm of reasonableness within any code of law. Here, this appears to be referring to abortions and abortion referrals, since this word is defined, yet never utilized in the body of the bill. Limited pregnancy centers largely cannot be required to refer, by law, for something that falls in opposition to any religious conviction. This is a clear and direct shot at the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and was recently upheld in the landmark case of *Burwell v Hobby Lobby Stores Inc.* where the court determine that Hobby Lobby could not be compelled by state or federal law to provide contraceptive coverage or abortifacients to their employees. This would completely end the third section of this bill since as Justice Alito wrote, "Since RFRA applies in these cases, we must decide whether the challenged HHS regulations substantially burden the exercise of religion, and we hold that they do. The owners of the businesses have religious objections to abortion, and according to their religious beliefs the four contraceptive methods at issue are abortifacients." This means that to compel any institution whether non-profit (which is specifically covered under RFRA) or for profit they could not be compelled to act in opposition to their religious beliefs.

In close I will quote Justice Alito where he wrote, "If the owners comply with the HHS mandate, they believe they will be facilitating abortions, and if they do not comply, they will pay a very heavy price... If these consequences do not amount to a substantial burden, it is hard to see what would." Forcing "limited pregnancy centers" to provide information regarding abortions is to put them in the same seat as the owners of Hobby Lobby, left to determine whether it is better to close their doors than to facilitate any abortion. The Supreme Court has determined that this is a great burden for the organization, and as such cannot be required of them at this or any time.

Very Respectfully,

Matthew A. Bertels, PhD