

My name is Rachael Bertels and I strongly oppose SB835, *"An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers"*. Please vote NO! In this testimony, I intend to show you that this bill is an attempt to get rid of a political point of view. It is chock full of false insinuations and holds a great potential to "cancel" whole groups of people who hold a viewpoint that the proponents of this bill reject. I used to work for the PRC of New London and these centers save the government thousands of tax dollars in aid for women and some men who have needs regarding their young children. These centers offer a way for women who face unplanned pregnancies to have access to resources, in the event they choose to continue the pregnancy. No coercion, just help. Many women choose abortion because they feel they have no other option or no support. By voting for legislation that gives these centers overlords with ulterior motives, they will certainly be shut down through financial attacks. These attacks will be doled out by the sole interpretation of one man who holds an opposite viewpoint. How can you consider making a law specific to only certain groups of people? Is this not viewpoint discrimination?

In the working definitions of terms, in line 26 (definition number 7), the "limited services pregnancy center" is targeted because they refuse to refer for abortion. Their viewpoint is being targeted. They are being defined by being pro-life. This very definition shows the viewpoint discrimination in this bill. Hypothetically if there were Limited service pregnancy centers that refer for abortion, would they be deemed acceptable? Yes, due to the language present in the bill. Yet, these centers have the God-given right not to participate in an act that goes against their conscience. They still want to help pregnant women, that is their mission and they legally must be allowed to do so within the confines of their conscience. If not, this is by definition viewpoint discrimination. CareNet of SECT has ALWAYS stated they do not refer for abortion, on the web, on the phone in person, and paper. The person last year said, "Most businesses only tell you what they offer, not all the services they do not offer", Yet CareNet has made it unavoidable clear.

Also, In the working definition of terms, explicitly number 9 (the definition of a "Pregnancy services center" on line 34, this bill insinuates that these clinics are pretending. This is false. Check the limited medical license of CareNet Pregnancy Resource Center in New London, CT. It's quite okay that they wear medical white coats, because those doing medical services are in fact, medical professionals!

Another problem is in line 59- line 61 there seems to be a "friendly phrase" following that word "deception", that allows for the error of the Pregnancy Center (through commission or omission) to possibly not know they are deceptive (so they are ignorant or deceptive). How can you create legislation that is not clear enough to define what they might become guilty of? The fact that they are being accused of the past several years for being deceptive and have not been stopped for this alleged deception shows that their activity is not cut and dry in its interpretation. Prolifers attest they are not deceiving people when they say, "Pregnant and need help?" and Prochoice people state they are! As we see, these are two warring viewpoints, not actual deception here. Somehow the Attorney General, is the one person to settle the debate by having unchecked power? Yes this will certainly quell the debate but also render the laws of the state of Connecticut unconstitutional and thus open the state to bleed out the money in legal battles like

the one in Baltimore (see <https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-ci-pregnancy-center-settlement-20180912-story.html>)

Attorney General Tong has testified in support of bills almost identical to this one. In one testimony (HB 7070), he says CUTPA won't help people who are victims of deceptive advertising because of the Center's corporate structure they "**could**" fall outside the ability to use CUTPA. He does not detail **how** specifically CUTPA would not apply, just that it was failed to be utilized in the past in MA. Regarding CT however, it is unavoidably clear and would cover the centers, even though no money is exchanged. Not only do they provide tangible services (physical items, pregnancy tests, costly ultrasounds in exchange for a woman's time) but there is clearer language in CT CUTPA that finances are not binding to the application of CUTPA. IF you go to the page in CT it states it can be applied...read CUTPA's page it states:

The law states that any person who suffers a measurable loss of money or property as a result of an unfair or deceptive act prohibited by CUTPA may bring an action to recover that loss...CUTPA specifies certain acts or practices as violations...**Unfair or deceptive acts do not need to be explicitly prohibited in CUPTA for a person or DCP to bring action against a company.**

This bill is not necessary. Our federal government regulates deceptive advertising through the FTC and so does our state government through CUTPA. IF someone is truly tricked, they can file a complaint through CUTPA. A point brought up in the past is that if there is some legal problem with CUTPA (which there is not!), revise it to cover the supposed "**gap**" Tong describes. **Should we not define the gap first?** They won't do that because they know CUTPA applies, they are just trying to make special laws for groups of people they disagree with. When asked, "why do we need this bill when we have CUTPA?" they were saying women couldn't figure out where to complain. This makes women sound stupid. They couldn't google who to complain to in CT? I was 16 years, old in a time when everyone did not have a pocket computer to google EVERYTHING. I found out how to get an abortion, pay for it and keep it secret for years. I was 16. Stop insulting people or using the ruse that they are so dumb they can't figure out how to get what they want. If accessibility to CUTPA is an issue, then require ALL businesses to post it on their walls!

Another argument accusing centers of deception had to do with the time-sensitive nature of abortion. Many claimed PRC's only delay a woman's ability to abort. In CT a woman can have up to 22 weeks to abort her child. I wish I was afforded one afternoon to explore my options and make an informed decision. Another argument is that abortion gets expensive the more time goes on... okay if women faced a financial loss over going to a PRC for one day, then file a complaint with CUTPA that lists a financial loss... yes CUTPA applies by the very scenarios proponents of the bill brought up! If CUTPA, in some weird universe absolutely could not be applied because someone found an actual reason why it did not, then why not amend this legislation and require all businesses to post it on their walls for the public to view?

Don't make special laws for certain people. Dr. MLK said in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail:

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or powerful majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make

binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Please look at CUTPA, define an actual problem with it, and fix it if necessary. Hands off pro-life pregnancy centers. They are Americans too, even if they do not hold the view of helping someone the same way proponents of this bill do. Make laws that apply to all Americans or wait your turn to feel the blow of legislated tyranny!