

Nancy Flanders, Moodus, CT

Re: SB 835 An Act Concerning Deceptive Practices at Limited Services Pregnancy Centers

Members of the Connecticut Public Health Committee:

SB 835, An Act Concerning Deceptive Practices at Limited Services Pregnancy Centers, is a bill of great concern to me as a woman, a mother, and a citizen of Connecticut. By nature, pregnancy resources centers are committed to being exactly what they are – a center of resources for women facing unplanned pregnancies. Nothing about their advertising is deceptive. They exist to help women make decisions concerning their pregnancies and offer pregnancy-related services to all women regardless of whether they chose life or abortion. Their services range from pregnancy tests to ultrasounds to baby gear to assistance in securing health care – all services are free and related to pregnancy and parenting. If you are pregnant and need help – pregnancy centers are there. Just because they don't commit abortions, does not mean they do not qualify as offering pregnancy-related services. If a restaurant states that it serves breakfast but the menu doesn't list waffles, does that mean it doesn't serve breakfast? Does that mean the restaurant has been deceptive? Stating that a pregnancy center offers services related to pregnancy does not in any way imply or require that they offer every single service related to pregnancy.

Research published in the Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons (attached) shows that 73% of post-abortive women who sought post-abortion counseling say they felt pressure to abort. That pressure came in many forms such as pressure from a partner or parents, and pressure women felt due to a poor financial situation, student status, age, or career goals. These women didn't choose abortion freely, they chose abortion because they felt they had no other choice. Pregnancy resource centers help women to overcome those pressures and obstacles so they can confidently choose to parent their children by their *own free will*. In allowing women to consider their options, pregnancy centers do not *delay* "health services" as this bill suggests. Rather, they give women the time, support, and space to think about their decision. No decision to terminate a pregnancy should be rushed. I think we can agree on this.

Pregnancy resources centers have helped women secure health care, housing, childcare, diapers, clothing, car seats, formula and more. They have helped women escape abusive relationships. All of this help and support is free of charge and often continues after the baby is born.

When a young woman named Acacia walked into a pregnancy center for a pregnancy test, she had already decided that she would abort if she was indeed pregnant. She told the pregnancy center client advocate that "there was no way that I could be a parent at that time." She said she wasn't judged, but listened to. An ultrasound was scheduled, allowing Acacia time to consider her decision. "Being able to sit and talk about what I was going through, whether it was personal, physical, mental – I knew I wasn't alone." She chose life for her son and is grateful for the friends she made at the pregnancy center and the help she received.

Alicia had just started her dream job when she found out she was pregnant. An online search for "pregnancy help" led her to a pregnancy help center. She spoke with a consultant who treated her with "compassion" and she benefited from childbirth and nutrition classes offered by the center as well as material items that new moms need. Every time she looks at her daughter, she is grateful for the people

at the pregnancy center. She did not search “abortion.” She searched “pregnancy help” and that is what she received.

Women aren’t tricked into visiting pregnancy centers and to imply that they are incapable of deciding on their own to visit a pregnancy center is anti-feminist. They visit them out of their own curiosity and can leave by their own free will if they choose. Women connect with pregnancy centers through the phone book, a Google search, through referrals from friends and family, or by seeing the sign on the door and bravely walking inside because they know in their hearts that they want to keep their babies.

While pro-choice groups such as NARAL claim that pregnancy centers are deceptive because they don’t offer abortion, the truth is that every time a pregnancy center helps a woman understand the resources available to her if she chooses to have her baby and that woman does indeed choose to have her baby, abortion businesses have lost a client. Abortion clinics see pregnancy resource centers as a threat to business and that’s how we have ended up here – attempting to pass a law that would dictate how private organizations advertise their services simply because they don’t provide abortion. *Imagine if any other organization or business worked with lawmakers to create bills that would effectively dictate how their competitor advertises or silence their competitors altogether.* This bill doesn’t even spell out what exactly fits under the umbrella of “deceptive advertising” and discriminates by singling out pro-life pregnancy centers.

Women deserve to know all of the options available to them, especially the abundance of resources that our generous state provides to families. I am proud to live in a state that cares well for its children through programs such as Husky and through afterschool programs, breakfast programs, and even the Young Parents Program which provides day care to infants and toddlers of high school students. These amazing resources aren’t available in all states, and women deserve to know that they exist. Please continue to allow pregnancy resource centers to do the work of connecting women to these resources, showing them that they aren’t alone, and building up their self-confidence so that they know they are strong enough and good enough to be mothers despite their life circumstances or the obstacles in their way.

Women deserve to know that they are capable of great things, strong enough to do hard things, and that they and their babies are loved.