

To the members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Nancy Goyette and I am writing in strong opposition to S.B. 835.

Our experience with our local center as well as others in CT has always been respectful, warm, welcoming and non-judgmental. When there were no other resources for support in healing from my past abortion experiences, a local PRC came along side me with caring and understanding counseling.

My daughter and I frequently volunteer at Hope Pregnancy Center in Cheshire, CT. We have witnessed the support, care and equipping they provide to women and families in unplanned pregnancy situations. They provide this through peer counseling, parenting instruction and classes, pregnancy care referrals, as well as material support to help feed, clothe and care for children through the first year of life and beyond. This is a tremendous help in building stronger families in our communities. Additionally, foster parents who visit the center have found assistance through material support to welcome their infant fosters into a safe and well equipped home.

Our concern as volunteers and supporters of pregnancy centers like Hope is that S.B. 835 appears to disregard the vital services they provide to women and families in our communities, as outlined below:

S.B. 835 accuses all CT Pregnancy Centers of false and “deceptive” advertising, in affect punishing centers because they do not provide abortions or abortion referrals as part of their services.

S.B. 835 does NOT clearly define “deceptive”, thereby giving the Attorney General unprecedented authority to determine what constitutes “deceptive advertising practices” and thereby opening the door for the Attorney General to sue pregnancy centers for any or all so called “deceptive” advertising. This would place undo financial burden on centers who offer all services at no charge to clients and their families, potentially cutting off a life-line for many who would benefit from these services.

Furthermore, S.B. 835 is a direct attack on religious liberties, blatantly discriminating against those centers who value the life of every individual: the moms, dads, as well as born and pre-born children, and coercing, by way of penalties, a center into referral for services that they do not believe to be consistent with their beliefs.

Additionally, all should be alarmed that S.B. 835 blatantly violates our first amendment right to freedom of speech by imposing requirements for options counseling and advertising not consistent with a center’s individual right to the honest sharing of their belief in the value of life, whether in person or through advertising.

Thank you,

Nancy Goyette