

To the Public Health Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as I am strongly in opposition to the proposed bill SB835 "AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS." This is my first time writing to the committee on a bill that has been before this committee since 2018.

As a retired professor of Manchester Community College and present Board Member at Caring Families Pregnancy Center located in Willimantic, Connecticut, I am proud of the heartfelt support our center provides women and men who are facing unplanned pregnancies. I have been an educator in this great state for over 35 years and am pleased with the educational as well as material support we provide free of charge for the past 32 years. Our educational support includes prenatal care, parenting enrichment programs, mentorship, including building strong community relationships to connect clients with programs assisting job placement, housing, health insurance, WIC, and other pregnancy related referrals. We continue to look for ways to educationally support our clients. We provide these services without receiving any state or federal government subsidy or funding but rely solely on the generosity of our donors. It pleases me to see how the local community has supported the work that we do not only through financial donations but through professionals volunteering at the center providing needed support to each valued client.

As a Board member we pride ourselves with providing these services in our local community without using deceptive advertising practices. Each year that the bill comes before the committee there has been no ability to provide any evidence of advertising materials here in Connecticut that are deceptive. This bill suggest that organizations like ours are actively deceiving and misleading people. In the bill it is very clear that the state of Connecticut intends to target only what they consider to be "limited service pregnancy centers", who are predominantly faith based, bypassing current protection laws for our organization.

Caring Families was the first to challenge the city of Hartford when they passed a very similar ordinance to SB835. Through the depositions the city of Hartford was unable to provide even one person who claim they were deceived through false advertising of the pregnancy center. Under subpoena and FOIA request they were unable to provide any documentation of any instance of any person ever being deceived or misled.

This bill is now in 2021 again before your committee. The current Covid precautions will prevent public involvement to the extent that was provided in the past. I would also like to point out that there never has been one documented complaint ever presented or investigated. I am asking that committee vote no on SB835 so that we all can use our time and resources where Connecticut needs it during these trying times. Caring Families continues to have a vision that with the support and help of our community we can bring resources and compassion to clients who are in need. This bill will impede the good work we are doing in Connecticut.

Thank you again.

Sandra Jenkins

Caring Families Board of Directors