

**Testimony in Support of S.B. No. 835 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING
PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS**

Lily Kofke and Mahira Tiwana
Public Health Committee
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To Public Health Committee Chairs Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

Our names are Lily Kofke and Mahira Tiwana, and we are graduate students at the Yale School of Public Health and chairs of the REPROJustice student group. **We write today in strong support of S.B. No. 835 (Raised) An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.**

As students of public health who are committed to patients' rights and equitable public health promotion, we recognize the fundamental importance of accessible, safe, and legal reproductive health care services for all people.

Limited service pregnancy centers, also known as crisis pregnancy centers, have been shown to provide biased, unethical, and unscientific health information with the specific aim of dissuading pregnant people from considering abortion care.^{1,2} The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine and the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology specifically published a statement regarding such centers' lack of adherence to medical and ethical practice standards.³

Withholding complete and accurate health information from patients is immoral and harmful to their health and wellbeing; a 2017 study found that when states enact abortion restrictions and have few evidence-based policies, women and children have poorer health outcomes.⁴ Deceptive advertising is effectively a restriction to accessing evidence-based and safe medical care. Delaying access to accurate information means, for example, that those individuals who ultimately decide to terminate a pregnancy

¹ Bryant, A.G. & Schwartz, J.J. (2018). "Why Crisis Pregnancy Centers Are Legal but Unethical." *AMA J Ethics*, 20(3):269-277. doi: 10.1001/journalofethics.2018.20.3.pfor1-1803 <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/why-crisis-pregnancy-centers-are-legal-unethical/2018-03>

² Bryant AG, Levi EE. Abortion misinformation from crisis pregnancy centers in North Carolina. *Contraception*. 86(6):752-756. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22770790/>

³ "Crisis Pregnancy Centers in the U.S.: Lack of Adherence to Medical and Ethical Practice Standards: A Joint Position Statement of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine and the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology." (2019). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 65(6): 821-824, ISSN 1054-139X, doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.08.008. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X19304136>

⁴ Center for Reproductive Rights & Ibis Reproductive Health. (2017). "EVALUATING PRIORITIES Measuring Women's and Children's Health and Well-being against Abortion Restrictions in the States VOLUME II." <https://ibisreproductivehealth.org/sites/default/files/files/publications/Evaluating%20Priorities%20August%202017.pdf>

are forced to seek out more expensive, higher risk and often less accessible care.^{5,6,7} Many stories can and have been told of the unnecessary financial and psychological damage done to those patients who have been misled and shamed by visiting limited service pregnancy centers under false pretences.^{8,9,10} Furthermore, there is an inequitable impact on young people, people of color, and low-income individuals who are specifically targeted by such advertising.^{11,12}

When limited service pregnancy centers use deceptive advertising to position themselves as legitimate medical providers they pose a threat to the health of pregnant people by misrepresenting the degree of medical knowledge and care they are qualified to administer. It is therefore with our combined backgrounds in public health, reproductive education, and health policy that we write in fervent support of holding limited service pregnancy centers accountable for deceptive advertising practices and in support of S.B. No. 835.

⁵ Rose, J.D. (2012). "The Public Health Risks of Crisis Pregnancy Centers." *Viewpoint*, 44(3):201-205. doi:10.1363/4420112.

<https://www.guttmacher.org/journals/psrh/2012/09/public-health-risks-crisis-pregnancy-centers>

⁶ "Crisis Pregnancy Centers in the U.S.: Lack of Adherence to Medical and Ethical Practice Standards: A Joint Position Statement of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine and the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology." (2019). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 65(6): 821-824, ISSN 1054-139X, doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.08.008.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X19304136>

⁷ Jones, R.K., Witwer, E., Jerman, J. (2019, September). "Abortion Incidence and Service Availability in the United States, 2017." Guttmacher Institute. <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/abortion-incidence-service-availability-us-2017>

⁸ Buchanan, M.J., Ahmed, O., Ravi, A. (2018, March 14). "The Anti-Choice Movement's Continued Pursuit of Politicized Medicine." Center for American Progress.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2018/03/14/447885/anti-choice-movements-continued-pursuit-politicized-medicine/>

⁹ Muller, R.T. (2016, February 18). "Crisis Pregnancy Centers Traumatize Women Through Deception." *Psychology Today*.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-trauma/201602/crisis-pregnancy-centers-traumatize-women-through-deception>

¹⁰ Litman, J. (2018, December 1). "The Crisis of Crisis Pregnancy Centers." *The Public Health Advocate*, Berkeley Public Health.

<https://pha.berkeley.edu/2018/12/01/the-crisis-of-crisis-pregnancy-centers/>

¹¹ "Crisis Pregnancy Centers in the U.S.: Lack of Adherence to Medical and Ethical Practice Standards: A Joint Position Statement of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine and the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology." (2019). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 65(6): 821-824, ISSN 1054-139X, doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.08.008.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X19304136>

¹² "Crisis Pregnancy Centers: An Affront to Choice." (2006). *National Abortion Federation*.

http://prochoice.org/pubs_research/publications/downloads/public_policy/cpc_report.pdf

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