



**Testimony for Public Hearing
Committee on Public Health
February 10, 2021**

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S.B. No. 835 AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS.

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Dr. Iyanna Liles and I am a licensed obstetrician gynecologist at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford and am here representing the Connecticut chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) as well as the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS). ACOG is our specialty's premier professional membership organization dedicated to the evidence-based practice and improvement of women's health. The Connecticut chapter represents 935 OBGYNs and partners in women's health here in our state. CSMS represents more than 7,000 physicians across the state from various medical and surgical specialties.

We are grateful for the opportunity again to provide strong support of S.B. 835, An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers (also known as crisis pregnancy centers, or CBCs). ACOG's position unequivocally calls for the "the elimination of all barriers to the provision of abortion" – including those posed by CPCs. S.B. 835 will help protect women from deceptive practices that insult their dignity and impede their access to time-sensitive reproductive health care services.

As a women's health physician and advocate, ensuring my patients have access to comprehensive accurate healthcare including reproductive health is integral to my daily work. I make it a priority to provide unbiased medical advice to my patients and empower them to make informed healthcare decisions, and I have personal experiences with the negative effects of CPCs' deceptive practices on patients. A few years ago, a new patient of mine, Mary, recounted to me her harrowing experience with a limited service pregnancy center. She had become pregnant, was scared, and did not know her options, so she decided to seek the medical advice of a local reproductive health clinic. This clinic was in close proximity to a limited service pregnancy center. While attempting to enter the reproductive health clinic as intended, she was intercepted by misleading advertisements and pressure from CPC workers; she ultimately was ushered into their building. Once inside the facility, she was further pressured to continue her

pregnancy, while no other options were discussed. She ultimately left more confused than when she left and ended up in my care. Mary and I talked about all her options including termination, adoption, and parenting and she ultimately made an informed decision that she felt was in her best interest. To me, patients deserve complete and accurate information about all of their options so they can make informed decisions. Thus, it is important that clear and honest advertising of services is the standard practice for all facilities, especially if healthcare services are provided.

This bill is about transparency and honesty in advertising. I am concerned for women and families in my community without this legislation in place. Prior public testimony on this issue have raised concerns regarding lack of reporting to state agencies purporting that this is not an issue. This assumption is false as illustrated by my patient encounter. Pregnancy decisions are very personal and sometimes patients may choose not to report inappropriate facility behavior due to concerns over their own safety or fear for reprisal. It is a threat to public health in our state when people are being deceived, delayed, or blocked in finding the reproductive healthcare services they are seeking. Regardless of anyone's personal feelings about abortion, I think we can all agree that no one should be misled or lied to when they are seeking medical care.

In conclusion, I thank you for the opportunity to discuss these issues on behalf of ACOG and CSMS that also affect my patients and strongly support S.B. 835 to limit the deceptive advertising practices of limited service pregnancy centers in our state. Together, we must remain vigilant against any new tactics that jeopardize the clinician-patient relationship, including those that rob Connecticut women of their chance to make informed decisions about their reproductive lives. I urge the committee to move forward with S.B. 835 to protect individuals in our state when they are seeking reproductive healthcare.

Thank you for your time.

Iyanna Liles, MD