

**Testimony for Public Hearing
Committee on Public Health
February 9, 2021**

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**SB 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 Lauren Marazzi and I am a fifth year MD/PhD student living in Farmington. I am here to testify in strong support of S.B. 835, An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

I remain deeply concerned that without the legislation of S.B. 835, pregnant persons who wish to make an informed decision about their pregnancy options will be at risk of being misled due to the deceptive language used in advertising by crisis pregnancy centers.

I am encouraged that our advocacy efforts have changed some of the deceptive advertising practices of some limited service pregnancy centers, such as no longer paying for ads at the top of google searches for abortion in Connecticut¹. However, I want to reiterate that deceptive advertising practices in regards to pregnancy options counseling is detrimental to both pregnant persons and healthcare providers, and the state should be active in preventing the occurrence of these advertising practices.

By the time a woman realizes she has missed her menstrual period (typically one of the first signs of pregnancy) she is already 5-6 weeks pregnant, and there are numerous medical and social reasons why a woman might find out she is pregnant much later than that. It is not uncommon for physicians to diagnose pregnancy at 8, 9, or 10 weeks gestation, and sometimes even past the first trimester mark.

Why is this so important? In CT, the law prohibits abortion beyond the date of viability, which is typically regarded as 24 weeks; this is not the only time constraint for abortion care. A woman who desires a medication abortion – one where she can take pills in the comfort of her own home, is only able to do so before she reaches 10 weeks gestation. Once a patient surpasses the 10 week mark, the only options for abortion care require more invasive medical procedures. Each week that goes by also increases the cost of these medical procedures, and consequently may restrict access for many women. These are integral reasons that highlight why time is of the essence for women seeking abortion care. Any deception that a woman encounters from a limited service pregnancy center could prevent her from accessing safe abortion care altogether.

There are many citizens in Connecticut who due to their job, accessibility to transportation, or other life responsibilities, will have limited time to make a decision with a healthcare professional regarding an unwanted pregnancy or further undergo an abortion. In the stress and fear that may come along with an unwanted pregnancy, a pregnant person may not realize that a crisis pregnancy center does not refer or provide abortions, especially when at the top of the webpage is a link that says “Abortion Info”, contains multiple pages discussing abortion, while a disclaimer stating lack of abortion counseling requires scrolling to the bottom of the site, such as the website for Care Net Pregnancy Resource Center of Southeastern Connecticut². If a pregnant person attends a CPC expecting abortion counseling or care but does not receive it, but eventually identifies and receives comprehensive care at a health clinic, it is possible that weeks have gone by in their pregnancy and they will no longer be eligible for an abortion they may have wanted.

In medical school, we are extensively trained and tested on how to communicate with patients to effectively build a strong patient-provider relationship and enter into an informed decision making paradigm. Our training goal, and eventual goal as providers, is to accurately explain all options of treatment for any medical condition, pregnancy included, so that our patients feel empowered to make the decision that is best for their health and their lives. Performing this action requires education, trust, empathy, and honesty. I simply do not see how informed decision making by a pregnant person can be achieved via counseling with volunteers at centers whose websites display medically unsound information regarding abortions³. The interception of the physician-patient relationship and informed decision making on the patient’s behalf by CPCs is unethical and places an undue burden on patients seeking comprehensive reproductive healthcare.

The Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act prohibits misleading advertising in trade and commerce. With S.B. 835, Connecticut has the opportunity to further protect its citizens from being misled or deceived in a situation where monetary transactions might not be made. Connecticut has the opportunity to protect its citizens from being misled or deceived when it comes to their own bodies, their own healthcare, and their own informed choices.

I strongly 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.

Lauren Marazzi

1. Previously paid Google advertisements for CPCs that appear on a search for “abortion Connecticut”

abortion connecticut

All News Images Maps Videos More

About 2,590,000 results (0.62 seconds)

Abortion? | Pregnant & afraid? | birthright.org
[Ad] www.birthright.org/Free/Help

Alternative to abortion. Free pregnancy service. Let us Help you. Call Now!
Respect · Non-judgmental · 24/7 Service · Confidential
Service Areas: Hartford, East Hartford, Manchester, West Hartford, New Britain
[Search Locations](#) · [News & Events](#) · [Ways To Get Involved](#)

2. Page for “Abortion Info” for CPC in CT, which prominently displays “Abortion Info” in the header bar of the landing page. Further scrolling reveals a footnote that states they do not refer for or provide abortions.

492 Montauk Ave, New London, CT 06320 Text 1-484-791-CARE (2273) Call 860-448-2990

CARE NET
PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTER
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT

HOME SEXUAL HEALTH PREGNANCY ABORTION INFO SERVICES CONTACT APPOINTMENTS



Abortion and Emergency Contraceptives

We provide free abortion information consultations on abortion pills, surgical abortion procedures, and emergency contraceptives.

MEDICAL ABORTIONS

RU-486: The Abortion Pill

How does the pill work? How late can it be taken?

SURGICAL ABORTIONS

Vacuum aspiration, D&C and D&E Abortions

Learn more about the different types of surgical abortions and how they are performed.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVES

Plan B and Ella

Learn more about emergency contraceptives and how they work.

Appointments



1:00

WE HAVE YOUR BACK

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY!

DISCLAIMER: We provide education on abortion and pregnancy options. We do not refer for or perform abortions or provide emergency contraceptives.

3. Example of unsound medical information on CPC websites. This statement is not approved by the American Congress of OB/GYNs and not evaluated by the FDA

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://abcwomenscenter.org/options/abortion/>. The browser's address bar and tabs are visible at the top. Below the browser window, the website's navigation menu is shown, including links for 'AM I PREGNANT?', 'YOUR OPTIONS+', 'STUDENTS', 'FAQ', 'CONTACT US+', and 'PARTNER'. A prominent blue button labeled 'MAKE AN APPOINTMENT' is also visible. The website's logo, 'abc WOMEN'S CENTER', is partially visible on the left side.

What If I Change My Mind?

If you have taken the first pill of RU-486, it may not be too late to continue your pregnancy. For more information on abortion pill reversal, visit abortionpillreversal.com or call 877-558-0333.