

To the members of the public health committee,

My name is Sarah Mariani and I strongly oppose S.B. 835. To begin, I am a coach at the Hope Pregnancy Center and do so as a volunteer. I feel that this bill was drafted as a direct opposition to the fact that Hope is a Christian-based organization and therefore does not support abortion. Regardless of Hope's religious affiliation or underlying beliefs of pro-life, this does not affect the center's mission to ultimately care for women and men of the community who are in a time of need. It is made clear on Hope's website that we do not perform or refer for abortions. The site lists "pregnancy decision options" with an asterisk that leads to the exact statement, "Hope Pregnancy Center does not perform or refer for abortion". This is far from deceptive. As a matter of fact, Hope actually welcomes women who have had abortions in the past and provides emotional counseling to them—often times, abortion is a very difficult decision and the mother's emotional distress during and after is not properly addressed.

My experience at Hope Pregnancy center has been rewarding to say the least. The fact that this organization is under attack for deceptive advertising baffles me. The women who work at this center are some of the most caring, accepting people I have ever met and I know the clients of the center feel the same way. I have clients who are married, unmarried, Christian, and not Christian. The center does not discriminate in the services we offer to the public, no matter the background of the client. We open our doors to anyone in need, and to think that we are under scrutiny for such a thing breaks my heart. It scares me to think that simply for the sake of Hope being 'pro-life', we are ultimately in danger of not being able to help those who are in less fortunate situations. I have had a client who was on her last single diaper for her child and no way to get more, tell me that she was going to have to 'stretch out' the use of the last diaper. Please realize that these are the kinds of women we help, and putting Hope under scrutiny is going to directly affect countless people who come to us for help. Please don't get caught up in the resentment that the pro-choice organization has towards us that is causing them to falsely say we are deceptive. We never intended to be deceptive in our services and hope you can realize this as well.

Thanks for your time,

Sarah Mariani