

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee,

Please vote no on S.B. No. 835, "AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS."

This is a directed attack on non-profit centers seeking to support alternatives to abortion. This bill is unnecessary for 2 main reasons: it attempts to hinder a beneficial source of information, and the public is smarter than you think.

First, Pregnancy Centers aim to inform those who seek them out with free testing, free ultrasounds, and emotional/mental support. Informed consent requires the ability to think about all the options, with available medical information. These services are expensive, and Pregnancy Centers are providing a much-needed service as non-profit entity. Pregnancy centers focus on the individual, create a calm, warm environment, give free medical service, and give them time to think without pressure tactics. Anyone who thinks they are deceptive, has not visited one personally.

Secondly, the Public can be trusted with information, and choice. Our culture believes strongly in choice especially when it involves the intimate nature of pregnancy and abortion. To think that the public needs to be protected from accidentally entering a Pregnancy Center instead of an abortion clinic is assuming a degree of ignorance that is astounding in our day and age. The State must think that people are idiots if they can be kept from an abortion in a country where abortion is so widely publicized. If someone is this naïve, they are not competent to give informed consent to abortion either.

What does this bill really reveal? By focusing on just one of the pregnancy organizations while ignoring abortion providers, this bill's intent is not to protect people from truly deceptive practices, but to target the speech of one side. Abortion providers have real financial incentives to deceive their customers, and to demonize speech that would reduce their profits. Pregnancy Centers have humanitarian motives, which is a strong protection against any coercive practices. This bill is suspect in its one-sided enforcement of an unproven problem.

Finally, during a time of intense pandemic stress, and lack of public access to the legislature, it seems opportunistic to push this bill at this time. The public needs all the support it can get from our legislature, not an attack on one sector that is providing support. There are so many other areas that the Public Health Committee should be focusing on. They should be building up all the social supports instead of seeking to attack Pregnancy Centers without proof of harm.