

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

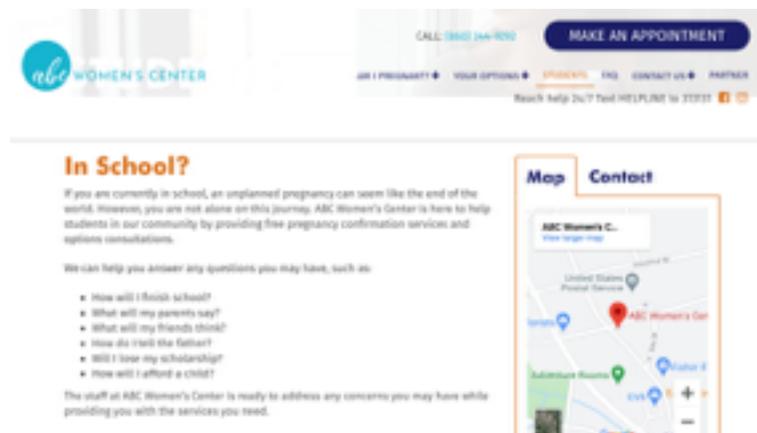
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S.B. 835 AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS

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

My name is Annie McGovern and I am a student at Wesleyan University. I am testifying today in support of S.B. 835 An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers. My testimony will address how crisis pregnancy centers place vulnerable populations, such as young students, in uniquely difficult situations and will also rebuke some common issues that legislators and anti-abortionists have historically taken with this bill.

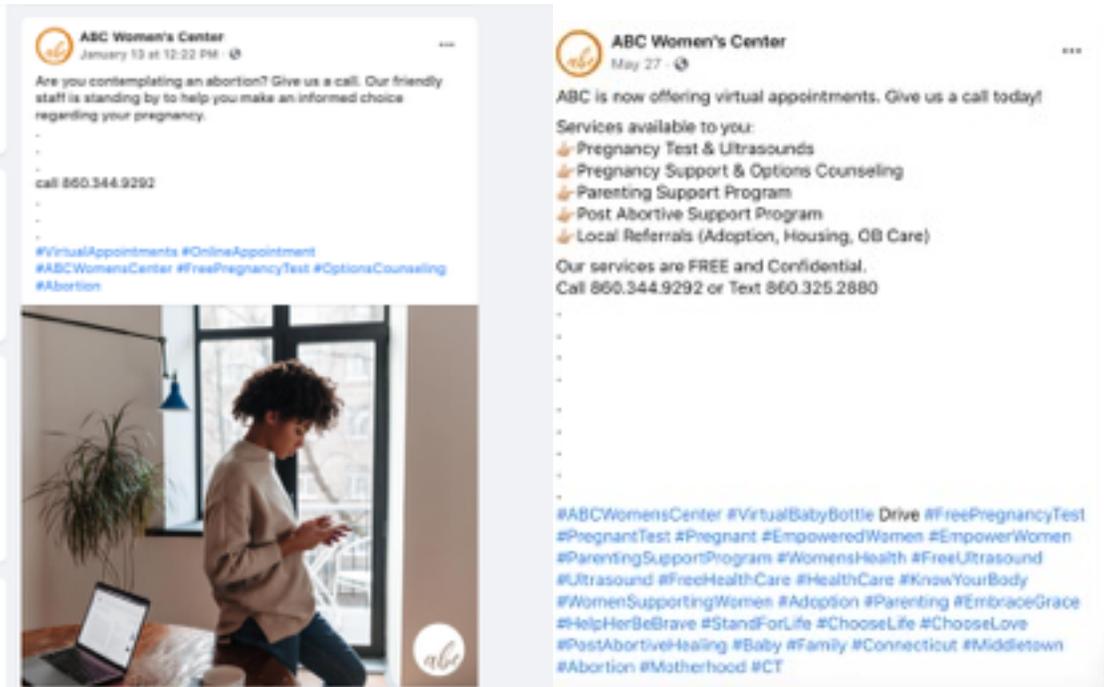
As a student living in Middletown, I am located within close proximity to a CPC, ABC Women's Center. ABC Women's Center tailors their advertising to specifically target local high school and college students. Their website even features a special tab entitled "students." I've incorporated a screenshot of that here:



Pregnant high school and college students are already placed in a precarious situation given the stigma surrounding teen pregnancies and the lack of information they may possess regarding reproductive care. Therefore, it is crucial that these individuals receive appropriate and factual care in a time-sensitive manner. I think about how little knowledge I possessed on this matter a

year or two ago. I was not dumb then, I simply lacked the exposure and education necessary to understand the difference between a CPC and a clinic that provides abortion services, especially given how similar their advertisements appear at first glance.

While the ABC Women's Center does note on their website that they do not perform nor refer for abortions, they do not include this statement on all social media posts. I've included some examples here (notice the use of #abortion):



Many young adults use social media as their primary news source and way of gaining information. They may choose to visit a CPC after seeing a singular ad on Facebook or Instagram without understanding that the CPC will not provide abortions, emergency contraception, or licensed medical advice. Such deceptive advertising may then prevent an individual seeking an abortion from receiving one. For example, if a young person has to balance school, their social life, extracurriculars, family, etc. and also faces limited access to transportation, they may have to schedule their appointment at a CPC a week out. If they do not realize until they arrive at their appointment that the CPC does not offer the support they need, then another week or so may pass until they are able to locate the proper clinic and secure an appointment there. This lengthy process lessens their options and potentially prevents them from receiving an abortion, which is a time-sensitive procedure.

I want to emphasize though, that this bill is not targeted at CPCs because of their anti-abortion stance. Other organizations that provide comprehensive medical and health care, such as Planned Parenthood, are already regulated by the state of Connecticut. CPCs, however, are not subject to CUTPA guidelines because their services are free. By proposing this bill, we simply want these centers to be held to similar advertising and marketing guidelines.

Another common, yet misleading, concern is that this bill is unconstitutional, that it would limit CPCs' abilities to voice their beliefs. This is *not true*. CPCs have every right to express their condemnation of abortion. This bill only asks that CPCs advertise their services accurately on all public platforms so that people in need of time-sensitive reproductive care can access it.

Further, it is insensitive to ask people who may have been traumatized by their experience receiving care to simply advocate for themselves and file a complaint through bureaucratic institutions such as DCP in order to find restitution against a center that has deceived them. In addition to being triggering, this ask ignores the reality of BIPOC and other marginalized individuals that resist or distrust governmental institutions due to systemic discrimination. What we need are preventative measures that protect people rightfully seeking abortions, emergency contraception, and licensed medical advice.

We've seen similar bills implemented successfully, most recently in Hartford. If deceptive advertising can be reduced in other places, it can be and should be reduced statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Annie McGovern