

Testimony re: SB835: An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Service Pregnancy Centers

Dear Committee Chairs Daugherty and Steinberg, Vice Chairs Anwar, Kushner and Gilchrist, and members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of SB835: An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Service Pregnancy Centers.

The mission of limited service crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) is to prevent abortions and use of emergency contraception by persuading women that adoption or parenting is a better option. Their advertising gives the impression that they are clinical centers offering legitimate medical services and advice, yet they are exempt from the regulatory, licensure, and credentialing oversight that apply to health care facilities. When women turn to CPCs for help, they do not receive comprehensive, accurate, evidence-based clinical information about the options available to them in Connecticut. Yet CPCs freely advertise across all media, and are especially predatory on digital media.

When any person is seeking healthcare, they must be able to access it in a well informed and timely manner. However, anti-choice crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) intentionally deceive those seeking time-sensitive reproductive care by appearing to be full-service medical clinics. Such false advertising is anathema to the function of offering services in the marketplace.

The CPC digital ads and web sites purport to provide objective medical information to those seeking reproductive healthcare: from pregnancy care to contraceptive care to abortion care. Yet when women reach out to them what they find is not a range of choices and information to help them make the decision best for them, but a laser focus on anti-abortion and anti-contraception rhetoric.

Prenatal care, abortion, and emergency contraception are all time-sensitive services. Delayed access poses a threat to public health and may eliminate a woman's ability to obtain these services altogether. The goals of fake pregnancy crisis centers include confusing, distracting, misleading and intimidating women - many of whom are vulnerable due to racial, age, education or economic status - long enough to push them outside the window of time when they can safely receive the care they need.

Connecticut has a proud history of standing up for women's full access to reproductive health and for a woman's right to choose what is best for her and her family. This bill seeks to advance Connecticut's interest in protecting women's access to timely, accurate reproductive healthcare. It is incumbent upon us to continue to make sure that false advertising by these CPCs no longer causes harm to our mothers, aunts, sisters and friends.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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