



February 8, 2021

Chairpersons Senator Abrams and Representative Steinberg, and Committee Members
Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

**Re: Written Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 835; AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE
ADVERTISING PRACTICES OF LIMITED SERVICES PREGNANCY CENTERS**

Dear Chairpersons Abrams and Steinberg, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 835.

The National Abortion Federation (NAF) is the professional association of abortion providers. Our mission is to unite, represent, serve, and support abortion providers in delivering patient-centered, evidence-based care. Our member facilities care for many of the people who choose abortion in the United States and Canada each year, including patients in Connecticut. NAF is the leading organization offering accredited continuing medical education to health care professionals in all aspects of abortion care. NAF member facilities adhere to our evidence-based *Clinical Policy Guidelines* (CPGs), which set the standards for quality abortion care.¹

NAF strongly supports Senate Bill 835, which would help protect patients from deceptive advertising meant to delay or prevent their access to abortion care. Fake women's health centers in Connecticut and across the country use a variety of misleading tactics to confuse or dissuade people from accessing abortion care. Though most of these fake centers are not licensed medical facilities, they often go to great lengths to appear as if they are. These fake centers frequently mimic the appearance and design of real medical facilities, use choice-centric terms in their advertising and nomenclature, and set up in close proximity to real clinics, all in an effort to confuse patients seeking abortion care.²

Inside their walls, fake women's health centers continue to harmfully mislead the people who have been brought in through deceptive tactics. Because they are not regulated like real abortion facilities, fake women's health centers are free to provide inaccurate information that is not supported by scientific evidence or backed by medical consensus. Many fake women's health centers engage in delay tactics, telling people to put off making a decision on seeking abortion care, or that they can access abortion care through all nine months of pregnancy, which is false and misleading.³ The unnecessary delays caused by visiting these fake health centers hit low-wage workers and those living in poverty the hardest. Patients who have mistakenly visited fake women's health centers have also suffered missed and inaccurate diagnoses that jeopardized their health.

¹ NATIONAL ABORTION FEDERATION, *CLINICAL POLICY GUIDELINES* (2020), available at https://5aa1b2xfmfh2e2mk03kk8rsx-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020_cpgs_final.pdf.

² #ExposeFakeClinics, <https://www.exposefakeclinics.com/what-is-a-cpc-2> (last visited February 8, 2021).

³ Lisa McIntire, *Crisis Pregnancy Centers Lie: The Insidious Threat to Reproductive Freedom*, NARAL Pro-Choice America, <https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/cpc-report-2015.pdf>, at 12-13 (last visited February 8, 2021).

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Every day, NAF's Hotline receives hundreds of phone calls from patients who are struggling to access abortion care, including those whose access has been impeded and their health jeopardized by fake women's health centers. Here is one patient's story:

Leanna⁴ is a Massachusetts resident who has a 17-year-old child and a full work life; when she became pregnant, she knew it was not the right time to add to her family. After she had a positive result on a pregnancy test, she searched the internet for clinics near her, and the first result that came up was Problem Pregnancy, which is located in Massachusetts but the website of which states that it also serves Connecticut residents. The website featured questions like "pregnant and don't know what to do?" Leanna thought the clinic had the appearance of a legitimate health clinic, and that its staff could help guide her as she weighed her options.

When she called to make an appointment, the fake women's health center never told Leanna what would be involved in her appointment or that they do not provide abortion care. It was only after Leanna had scheduled her appointment, gone to the facility, and spent 15 minutes talking to a staff member that she learned the center did not support abortion and was pushing her to commit to adoption. Feeling she had to be polite, Leanna stayed through the remainder of the appointment, though she told the staff she knew what she wanted to do. The fake women's health center never provided her with other options or information, nor did they refer her to an ob/gyn or tell her where she could receive abortion care.

Leanna left the appointment feeling overwhelmed and guilty for simply considering her options and seeking the health care she needed. She was so rattled and overcome with mistrust that it took her another week to schedule an appointment at a legitimate women's health clinic. By the time she saw a legitimate health care provider Leanna was ten weeks into her pregnancy, right on the edge of losing the ability to choose medication abortion care. As a result of the fake women's health center's deception, Leanna was delayed three weeks in accessing care, and she was left feeling misled and outraged.

People seeking abortion care need access to quality health care and medically sound information. When fake women's health centers deceptively portray themselves as real clinics providing the full range of pregnancy services, they are interfering with a patient's right to access the health care they need. A person who has decided to seek abortion care deserves to be able to access that care from a qualified provider without being subjected to deception, intimidation, or delay.

NAF urges the Committee to consider the health and well-being of Connecticut citizens and vote in favor of Senate Bill 835.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Wiggins

Chelsea Wiggins
Counsel

⁴ *Name has been changed to protect patient privacy.