

Public Health Committee
Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
S.B. 835: An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services
Pregnancy Centers
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-seven years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate in the development of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security and increase gender equity in our state.

CWEALF encourages the Committee to support S.B. 835: *An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers*.

Limited services pregnancy centers, or crisis pregnancy centers (CPC), pose an imminent threat to Connecticut's public health and a woman's right to reproductive healthcare and bodily autonomy. CPCs are anti-abortion counseling centers that use deceptive advertising techniques to lure people away from state-licensed reproductive healthcare centers and currently outnumber state-licensed family planning clinics in Connecticut. CPCs often falsely present themselves as comprehensive reproductive healthcare clinics and do not provide or refer patients to abortion care, emergency contraception, or birth control.

Access to comprehensive, legitimate, and time-sensitive health care is critical to the economic security of women in Connecticut. Women in our state currently earn \$0.84 to every dollar paid to men, a gap that is wider for women of color.¹ Research indicates that women who are denied access to abortion face economic hardship in the years following.² The ability to control the timing and size of one's family also significantly

¹ AAUW, The Simple Truth About the Gender Wage Gap, https://www.aauw.org/aauw_check/pdf_download/show_pdf.php?file=The_Simple_Truth

² Women's Media Center. 2018. "Lack of abortion access creates economic hardships for women." <https://www.womensmediacenter.com/news-features/lack-of-abortion-accesscreates-economic-hardships-for-women>

impacts whether a woman is able to attend and complete college and achieve economic security.³

When a woman seeks medical care at an anti-abortion CPC, she is met with misinformation and shame rather than the comprehensive, truthful reproductive healthcare. Women should not be exposed to psychological and emotional distress when trying to receive guidance when making their decision on whether or not to start a family.

Deception or delay in access to essential health care poses a significant threat to our state's public health. Senate Bill No. 835 protects Connecticut women from deception and fraud and does not attack the First Amendment rights of the crisis pregnancy centers. Senate Bill No. 835 will prohibit the use of false, misleading or deceptive advertising, and will not affect the centers' right to freedom of speech.

CWEALF encourages the Committee to support S.B. 835 to regulate the deceptive practices of CPCs and to ensure that Connecticut's women receive truthful information about their reproductive healthcare options to make informed decisions about their health.

³ Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). 2015. Reproductive Health and Women's Educational Attainment: Women's Funds' Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Women. Retrieved from: <https://iwpr.org/publications/reproductive-health-and-womens-educational-attainment-womens-funds-strategies-to-improve-outcomes-for-women/>