



**Testimony In Regard to:**

**HOUSE BILL 5309: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF NOTICE TO A PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A MINOR CHLD WHO SEEKS TO RECEIVE PREGNANCY-RELATED HEALTH CARE SERVICES: OPPOSITION**

**March 2, 2026**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee: thank you for providing the Center for Children's Advocacy ("CCA") the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to this dangerous attempt to restrict access to reproductive health care for minors. The Center for Children's Advocacy has a long history of working to protect the health and well-being of its vulnerable youth clients and their families. CCA is the largest non-profit legal organization in New England devoted exclusively to advocating for the legal rights of children. Affiliated with the University of Connecticut School of Law, CCA provides holistic legal services for poor children and youth in Connecticut communities through individual representation, training, and systemic advocacy. A significant component of CCA is our Medical-Legal Partnership, an interdisciplinary collaboration between CCA and medical/clinical partners at Yale, Yale Child Study Center, Connecticut Children's and other health entities that seek to address health disparities and promote health equity through interdisciplinary interventions. At CCA, we have particular experience and expertise in advocating for and protecting the confidentiality rights of the youth of our state.

Connecticut has always been at the forefront of respecting and protecting access to confidential reproductive health care for all residents, regardless of age. Our current laws specifically provide universal confidential access to treatment relative to abortion (CGS § 19a-601), HIV testing and treatment (CGS § 19a-592), and the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (CGS § 19a-216). Last session, the legislature added

confidential access to contraception (Public Act 25-28). The passage of that legislation underscored Connecticut's commitment to protecting a minor's right to reproductive health care.

Raised Bill 5309 is an aberration to the state's historical respect for women's privacy and squarely puts young women's health and well-being at risk.

## **EXISTING CONNECTICUT LAW MANDATES COUNSELING AND EDUCATION**

Connecticut has never taken minor access to abortion lightly. Our current statute contains a panoply of requirements designed to educate and support young people who are facing the challenge of pregnancy. These required supports include:

- a) Providing information and counseling in a manner and language that the youth can understand.
- b) Explaining that the information is given objectively and is not intended to coerce, persuade or induce the minor to choose an abortion over carrying the pregnancy to term.
- c) Explaining that the decision to have an abortion can be withdrawn or reconsidered.
- d) Explaining the alternative choices for managing the pregnancy.
- e) Having a discussion with the youth regarding including their parents or guardian in the decision-making process.

The above counseling is a mandatory component of the existing statute and requires written attestation that the minor has received the information.

## **NOTICE REQUIREMENTS ARE UNNECESSARY AND PUT YOUTH AT RISK OF HARM**

Requiring parental notification as a condition precedent to receiving abortion services is at odds with our priorities around women's healthcare and puts lives at risk. Studies show that most minors do consult with their parents before seeking confidential care

and that includes abortion care.<sup>1</sup> However, a certain percentage of teens live in dysfunctional families and parental involvement requirements can put these pregnant youth at particular risk of violence. Studies also show that one in five pregnant minors have experienced physical abuse by a parent or caretaker, and they fear that disclosing pregnancy will cause additional violence or will result in being forced to leave their home.<sup>2</sup> A particularly quizzical component of the HB 5309 suggests that some alternative adult could be identified to receive information about the youth's need for an abortion. This aspect of the bill is beyond broad and provides no guarantee that the youth will be safe.

There are many other negative results of forced parental notice including delays to requisite care, leading to costlier, later-term procedures.<sup>3</sup> Notice laws have also led to an increase in youth engaging in potentially dangerous travel out of state to seek abortion support.<sup>4</sup>

## **JUDICIAL BYPASS IS HARMFUL TO PREGNANT YOUTH**

Forcing a youth to involve the court to protect their privacy rights is invasive and damaging. Research has shown that minors involved in a bypass proceeding find it to be traumatizing and viewed as a form of punishment, with the court system disciplining them for their sexuality, their pregnancy and their abortion decision. The practical realities around orchestrating a bypass process are also immense – court proceedings take time even on an expedited basis and the passage of time obviously impacts treatment. Meanwhile, the youth are inevitably going to have challenges navigating school attendance, transportation to medical appointments and counselors as they

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<sup>1</sup> Dailard C and Richardson CT. "Teenagers' Access to Confidential Reproductive Health Care Services." The Guttmacher Report on Public Policy, 2005: 8(4).

<sup>2</sup> Madkour, Aubrey Spriggs et al. "Pre-Pregnancy Dating Violence and Birth Outcomes Among Adolescent Mothers in a National Sample." Journal of interpersonal violence vol. 29,10 (2014): 1894-913.

<sup>3</sup> Dennis A et al., The Impact of Laws Requiring Parental Involvement for Abortion: A Literature Review, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

prepare for this court process. Even more daunting is that this youth is tasked with crafting a legally defensible argument that they are mature enough to decide about their reproductive health needs by a “preponderance of the evidence”. Regardless of all the effort, time, and emotional turmoil, the court could still deny the youth’s petition, and the court could dismiss it.

Finally, a salient study found that “the bypass process itself causes emotional harm through unpredictability and humiliation. Despite participants’ resilience, the process may have negative consequences for adolescent health.”<sup>5</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Our current laws lead to safe and effective results for youth seeking information and options around pregnancy. The mandates in HB 5309 can lead to adverse outcomes, potential violence, emotional distress, and delay in treatment. For these reasons, the Center for Children’s Advocacy strongly opposes HB 5309.

Respectfully submitted,

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<sup>5</sup> National Library of Medicine, *Judicial Bypass for Minors Post-Dobbs*, Accessed February 2026.