



# Hartford GYN Center

701 Cottage Grove Rd C110 ♦ Bloomfield, CT 06002  
(860) 525-1900 ♦ [www.thewomenscenters.com](http://www.thewomenscenters.com)

February 27th, 2026

Chairpersons Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and Committee Members  
Judiciary Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and Distinguished Members of the  
Judiciary Committee,

My name is Roxanne McNellis and I am submitting testimony on behalf of Hartford GYN Center, part of The Women's Centers with locations in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am writing to express both opposition to H.B.5309, which would limit access to care, and strong support for S.B. 295, which would strengthen protections for providers and patients. Together, these positions reflect a single, urgent reality: patients need access to safe, timely, evidence-based care, and providers need the ability to deliver that care without fear of criminalization or political interference.

As sexual and reproductive healthcare providers, we see firsthand how restrictive policies, such as those involving forced parental involvement or judicial bypass frameworks, do not protect patients. Instead, they delay care, increase medical and logistical risks, and disproportionately harm young people already facing barriers to healthcare.

Most young people already involve a trusted adult in their decision-making. For those who cannot safely do so, these laws can put them at risk of harm or force them to leave their home state to access care. This not only delays time-sensitive medical care but also separates patients from their support systems.

Judicial bypass is often presented as an alternative, but in practice navigating complex legal systems is burdensome, time-sensitive, and intimidating for young patients. Rather than functioning as a safeguard, it often becomes another obstacle. At our clinic in Pennsylvania, we support young people who must secure a judicial bypass and have seen firsthand how process delays access to care, worsen healthcare access inequities,



# Hartford GYN Center

701 Cottage Grove Rd C110 ♦ Bloomfield, CT 06002  
(860) 525-1900 ♦ [www.thewomenscenters.com](http://www.thewomenscenters.com)

and add harmful stigma.<sup>1</sup>

These types of policies are part of a broader pattern of efforts to restrict pregnancy-related care, including contraception and abortion access, incrementally. They undermine patient autonomy, interfere with the patient-provider relationship, and ultimately make it harder for people to receive the care they need.

At a time in history when sexual and reproductive health is being eviscerated through court decisions, restrictive laws, funding cuts and rising opposition extremism, we should expand access to these critical services. We have an opportunity to do so today by advancing S.B. 295

Medication abortion has become a critical tool in maintaining access for patients in rural areas, healthcare deserts, and states impacted by abortion bans. Telehealth has made it possible for patients to receive safe, effective care without the burdens of travel, time off work, childcare, and cost<sup>23</sup>.

However, access to medication abortion is under increasing attack. We are seeing coordinated efforts at both the state and federal level to restrict this care through attempts to rescind FDA approval, limit telehealth prescribing, and even invoke outdated laws like the Comstock Act to ban the mailing of abortion medication. These efforts persist despite clear medical evidence: medication abortion is safe, effective, and widely used. The reality is that those who oppose abortion access understand how essential this form of care is and are working to eliminate it.

As providers, we are ready and able to meet this moment. Our centers have the experience, infrastructure, and commitment to provide medication abortion, including via telehealth, to patients who cannot otherwise access care. If Connecticut strengthens its shield laws through S.B. 295, we would be able to expand these services safely and responsibly.

But right now, we are being forced to weigh our duty to patients against real legal risks. Across the country, providers are being targeted, investigated, and threatened for

---

<sup>1</sup> See Sarah Horvath & Susan Frietsche, *Judicial bypass for minors post-Dobbs*, 19 *Women's Health* 1, 2-3 (2023), [https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10752100/pdf/10.1177\\_17455057231219601.pdf](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10752100/pdf/10.1177_17455057231219601.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Rachel K. Jones & Amy Friedrich-Karnik, *Medication Abortion Accounted for 63% of All US Abortions in 2023—An Increase from 53% in 2020*, Guttmacher Inst. (Mar. 2024), <https://www.guttmacher.org/2024/03/medication-abortion-accounted-63-all-us-abortions-2023-increase-53-2020>

<sup>3</sup> Ushma D. Upadhyay et al., *Effectiveness and Safety of Telehealth Medication Abortion in the USA*, 31 *Nature Med.* 1191 (Feb. 15, 2024), <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-024-02834-w#citeas>.



# Hartford GYN Center

701 Cottage Grove Rd C110 ♦ Bloomfield, CT 06002  
(860) 525-1900 ♦ [www.thewomenscenters.com](http://www.thewomenscenters.com)

providing lawful care. We aren't lawyers and yet we find ourselves navigating an increasingly hostile legal landscape.

This work is our calling. We serve a diverse and often underserved population, many of whom have no other options for care. We want to help those who need us, but we cannot do so if we risk being criminalized or jailed for providing evidence-based medicine.

Our clinics operate across the Northeast, including in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Connecticut. We see every day how inconsistent state policies create confusion, delays, and barriers for patients. Strengthening Connecticut's shield law would protect providers and help create a more coordinated, compassionate system of care across state lines.

Policies that restrict access to sexual and reproductive healthcare like H.B. 5309 cause real harm to patients by delaying or denying care to those who need it. At the same time, legislation like S.B. 295 provides a path forward by protecting providers and expanding access to safe, effective care.

We strongly urge the Judiciary Committee and the Connecticut General Assembly to reject H.B. 5309 and to support S.B. 295.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Roxanne McNellis

On behalf of Hartford GYN Center

Director of Public Affairs, The Women's Centers (CT, NJ, PA)