



**Sarah Inskeep**  
**Opponent Testimony for House Bill 297**  
**Ohio House Ways and Means Committee**  
**Tuesday, November 12, 2019**

Chairman Merrin, Vice-Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Ohio House Ways and Means Committee thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to House Bill 297.

My name is Sarah Inskeep and I am the Ohio State Policy and Movement Building Director for URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity. URGE is a reproductive justice organization powered by young people in Southern and Midwestern states, which includes Ohio. On behalf of our staff, youth members, and statewide chapters I humbly ask you to stop House Bill 297.

House Bill 297 is the latest effort by anti-abortion groups to continue wasting state resources and incentivize donations to fund the deceptive practices of so-called crisis pregnancy centers, otherwise known as fake health care clinics.

This bill seeks to create the first state tax credit of its kind. In short, donations made to non-profit organizations that pose as medical facilities and have a long documented history<sup>1</sup> of lying and coercing people would receive a state tax credit that equals 50% of the donated amount under this bill. This would be in addition to the already 7.5 million dollars in the most recent biennium budget that was allocated from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant program and now funds these fake health care clinics.<sup>2</sup> This is a reckless and outrageous use of Ohioans' tax dollars and must be put to an immediate end.

Last week we heard from lobbyists and individuals who work directly with fake health care clinics — and not one of them mentioned the fact that these clinics **are not** licensed health care facilities. There was, however, testimony submitted from an out-of-state anti-abortion lobbyist that plainly outlined how most fake health care clinics are operated by churches or other faith-based organizations. This demonstrates that House Bill 297 is a clear attempt to continue siphoning money from state funding streams to line the pockets of the biased ideological extremists who disguise themselves as health care professionals and operate these facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> American Medical Association Journal of Ethics. *Why Crisis Pregnancy Centers Are Legal But Unethical.* <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/why-crisis-pregnancy-centers-are-legal-unethical/2018-03>

<sup>2</sup> The Columbus Dispatch, *New Budget Earmarks \$7.5 Million of Ohio Taxpayer Money for Pregnancy Centers,* <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20190726/new-budget-earmarks-75-million-of-ohio-taxpayers-money-for-pregnancy-centers>



In Ohio, fake health care clinics are known to falsely market services and intentionally set up their business directly next to, or in close proximity to, comprehensive reproductive health care providers like Planned Parenthood and other independent providers<sup>3</sup>. Fake health care clinics deceptively target various communities, which include college and university campuses across the state.

Over the years, both as a previous patient advocate and currently with my work at URGE engaging young people in the fight for reproductive justice, I have heard countless stories about the unfortunate experiences young people have had after being misled to go to these facilities. Stories of people being told the incorrect gestational age of their pregnancy, that abortion is linked to causing cancer or mental illness, and the promise of receiving “free” products just to find out that that they must participate in biased volunteer programming in order to receive needed items such as diapers and clothing. These practices are grossly incorrect, unethical, and transactional in nature.

Tricking and lying to young people when it comes to their health care is wrong — full stop. When a person has made the decision to have an abortion or to become a parent, they deserve information that is timely, comprehensive, medically accurate, and arms them with knowledge about the full range of sexual and reproductive health care options, which includes abortion. This the exact opposite of what crisis pregnancy centers do. Instead, they deploy dangerous tactics to confuse and falsely inform people about their pregnancies with the ultimate goal of delaying or pushing abortion care completely out-of-reach for people in Ohio.

Fake health care clinics are largely unregulated and left to spread misinformation that is culturally incompetent, not inclusive, and not comprehensive. Our queer, trans, Black and Brown young people in underserved areas across Ohio that have nowhere else to go deserve better than this. The people living in the Ohio’s counties that are suffering from alarming infant and maternal mortality rates deserve better than this. The State of Ohio should not be aiding dangerous misinformation campaigns in anyway, including through tax credit initiatives such as the one proposed in House Bill 297.

I urge this committee to vote no on House Bill 297 and to rather invest in credentialed organizations that would effectively use these resources to provide comprehensive and compassionate health care to people throughout Ohio. Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to testify and I’m happy to answer any questions you have.

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<sup>3</sup> Vice. *How Anti-Abortion Zealots Pose as Medical Professionals to Trick Pregnant Women*. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/pae9ak/how-anti-abortion-zealots-pose-as-medical-professionals-to-trick-pregnant-women](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/pae9ak/how-anti-abortion-zealots-pose-as-medical-professionals-to-trick-pregnant-women)