

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 Amelia Stower. I am a current patient care advocate and Capital Care Toledo (CCT), the only abortion clinic in Toledo, Ohio. I have worked there for about a year and a half now. I am also a current student at the University of Toledo where I am a double-major in Nursing and Women's and Gender Studies. I have been there for two and a half years. During my time at both places, I have heard from patients about their experiences with Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs), I have done a lot of research over CPCs, and I have seen the impact of them on students, young people, and patients.

As a patient advocate, I've had numerous patients sit down during consult and ask if we actually provide abortions at our clinic. CPC's are dangerous—they deceive and lie to patients. When people go to CPC's, they will get religion based lectures on how abortion is wrong. They will use scare tactics such as the false claim that there is a link between breast cancer and abortions or that having an abortion will cause future miscarriages or infertility. They overexaggerate the risks associated with an abortion, claiming they that are painful, life threatening procedures. They will mention the risks of heavy bleeding, uterine-perforation, scarring, without indicating their low likelihood of happening. They will talk about the false issues called "Post- Abortion Syndrome" and claim they will regret it. However, studies show, people do not regret their abortions, and I can say the same from what I have seen at the clinic.

In addition, CPC's will employ delay tactics—meaning that patients are given the wrong timeline to push it out as long as possible. They will make them go through unnecessary, repeated tests. For example, they'll claim that the need multiple ultrasounds to check viability and make them think they'll miscarry, so they don't need an abortion any way. Or CPCs will give them the wrong gestation to make them think they are earlier or further along than they actually are in an attempt to push them past the cut off of when they can get an abortion. At CCT, we've had a patient who was told she was 8 weeks along when she was actually 11. She then couldn't be seen at our clinic because she was too far along. What's scarier: a trained technician purposefully misleading patients or someone being that untrained doing an ultrasound?

These people don't know that they're going to an unlicensed facility without medically trained staff when they go to CPCs. These facilities will typically not disclose that they're unlicensed either. They also won't tell them that they don't actually provide or refer to abortion services. Instead, they will do what they can to get people to come in. We had a patient who thought they called us and were making an appointment with us but it turned out to be a local CPC. Not once did that CPC tell them they weren't CCT. Instead, they led them on to get them to go to their clinic instead.

CPC staff are even outside of our clinic. So even if someone were to come to us, CPC's cannot be escaped. CPC staff and volunteers will protest outside of the clinic and

harass the patients when we are open. Outside of the clinic, they will spout inaccurate information, shame people for coming in, handout pamphlets for their centers that are made to shame them. One of the pamphlets has a link where they ask the patients to watch a video of an abortion surgery. In addition, they own the parking lot across from us which gives them a place to congregate and put up a sign which often have negative messages. They will also take part in protests that are held against us.

CPCs are even prominent on college campuses. All around Toledo, signs for CPC's can be seen. Signs will have messages about being depressed after. They will also include messages about free testing—pregnancy tests, ultrasound test, etc. CPC's will also often buy a building close to campuses. There is one about a half mile away from UT. They also have an organization that is on campus. UT has been a host for fundraiser 5ks, events, and recruitment for CPCs. And if you are a student, think your pregnant, and go to UT services, they are likely to refer you to a CPC.

People should not have to worry about if a facility is real or not. They also shouldn't have to worry if there are trained medical professionals or not. More importantly, they should never walk into a facility and be deceived and given false information. Flat out—what CPCs are doing is harmful and wrong. House Bill 297 not only condone all of this, but it also incentivizes people who donate to these types of facilities.

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.