

## **Ohio SB 159: Good for Pregnancy Resource Centers and the Ohioans We Serve**

Everyday a scared pregnant woman walks into one of the 123 pregnancy resource centers across Ohio. She may not have told a soul that she is pregnant, or she may have already been scolded that she is too young, too poor, or too incompetent to parent the child growing in her womb. She may bring the father of the baby with her, who is also fearful that he can't be an effective dad as he lacked a positive father figure in his upbringing.

This is where Pregnancy Center Plus and other pregnancy resource centers step in to lower her fear and raise her hope. We empower her not *just* to have the baby, but to *flourish* as a parent, or to support her through the adoption process.

Mandy\* came to PCPlus, tearful, believing that abortion was her only option. She, like 80% of women seeking termination, did not truly want an abortion but felt alone and panicked at the daunting prospect of providing for a child.

With love and compassion, our Client Advocate who spoke with her gave her so much *more* than abortion alternatives. Mandy met her 8-week-old unborn baby for the first time, heard his strong heartbeat as she watched him move across the ultrasound screen. She had her first prenatal visit with a midwife, who allayed her medical concerns through our on-site telehealth program.

She also learned about the loving choice of adoption from our on-site adoption agency. She left armed with vital community resources and new-found assurance that, "I can do this!"

Next, Mandy and her boyfriend enrolled in our parenting classes and accessed an entire network of pediatricians, parenting and nutritional coaches, as well as other expectant parents. Throughout her pregnancy, her Client Advocate continued to check in on her. She returned for maternity clothes and supplies for her baby. She received a free crib and a car seat through generous donors.

Last week, Mandy and her now-fiancée returned to the Center cradling little Roland\*. These proud parents beamed as they explained, "We're sleep deprived but so grateful to have this little guy. Thank you for helping us to realize that our greatest blessing was just on the other side of our greatest fear."

Often, teenage clients need help in revealing to their parents that they are pregnant. They come to us thinking, "My parents will kill me." We provide a safe space to pause, become fully informed, and find the best ways to approach their parents with the news. We reassure them that they are not alone and that we would be happy to sit with their parents to process the situation. We let them know that despite their age, no one can coerce them into having an abortion.

Sometimes parents accompany their daughter to the appointment. Shantel\* had just been told of her daughter's pregnancy that morning and was reeling from the shock of it. She, like many parents, was angry, blamed herself, and was grieving the "loss of her dream" for her daughter's future. We specialize in calming these emotions, and in helping the family to arrive at a life-affirming decision everyone can live with. Shantel and her daughter left the Center, arm-in-arm, with confidence that although the circumstances were difficult, together they would welcome this baby into their hearts and home.

As these stories illustrate, Ohioans can count on Pregnancy Center Plus and the other centers throughout the state to provide free health services and exceptional support for couples facing an untimely pregnancy. We are there to assist them from the crisis to the cradle and into a thriving future. Ohio Senate Bill 159, by establishing a nonrefundable tax credit for donations to pregnancy resource centers, goes a long way in assisting pregnancy help centers to do just that.

*\*Pseudonym*

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