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OP-EDS OPINION

# Back Hartford Ordinance For Women's Health

By ABIGAIL CUTLER and MEREDITH PENSAK  
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Op-ed: An ordinance, backed by Mayor Luke Bronin, to regulate crisis pregnancy centers in

Hartford is needed to guard women's access to timely, appropriate health care as is a federal measure sponsored by Sen. Richard Blumenthal.



As obstetrician gynecologists, we provide full-spectrum, comprehensive reproductive health care — including abortion and contraception services — so that our patients can be free to lead their lives and pursue their dreams. We trust women to make decisions that are best for them, their futures and their families. Faith-based crisis pregnancy centers, on the other hand, engage in manipulative and deceptive tactics to prevent women from obtaining evidence-based medical information about their pregnancies and their options for exercising control over their reproductive lives.

Crisis pregnancy centers do not trust women. Their tactics have no place in our cities, which is why we support Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin and his effort to ensure women receive the reproductive health care that they deserve. The mayor is moving forward a city ordinance that would hold crisis pregnancy centers accountable for the medical care they profess to give.

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The ordinance, which could be voted on by the end of the month, would require the crisis pregnancy centers to disclose whether their staff members have medical licenses. They would also be banned from engaging in false or deceptive advertising practices.

Fines of \$100 a day could be levied against centers that violate the ordinance. If adopted, the city's health and human services department would begin enforcement

within 30 days.

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The mayor said he backed the measure after getting complaints and out of his concern that women are being lied to or misled when asking for help with their health care. Other proponents of the ordinance have pointed specifically to a facility on Jefferson Street called the Hartford Women's Center, which is near an independent abortion clinic. They say the women's center was strategically positioned to intercept patients heading for the clinic.

Since 2011, lawmakers nationally have erected more than 300 restrictions on a woman's ability to obtain critical reproductive health care and abortion services. In many states, women must travel long distances, sit through medically inaccurate counseling, undergo unnecessary ultrasounds and abide mandatory waiting periods that require taking time off from work, finding childcare and paying for lodging and other expenses. These restrictive measures offer no health benefits; rather, they simply send women the message that they're not to be trusted with their decisions. They are demeaning and, importantly, they are dangerous to women's health.

For years, women in Connecticut have been fortunate to face relatively few of these restrictions, but crisis pregnancy centers pose a new threat to women's decision-making autonomy. Connecticut women deserve to be free from threats to their health and safety. They deserve medically sound guidance and evidence-based options counseling. We're not the only ones who think so. According to a recent survey published by the Center for Reproductive Rights, 61 percent of adults in the United States support "a federal law protecting a woman's legal right to abortion by upholding Roe v. Wade and preventing restrictions that make it more expensive and difficult to access safe, legal abortion."

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Protection Act — a federal law that would end restrictions on women's access to care. The Women's Health Protection Act would guard a woman's right to safe and legal abortion nationwide. It would stop states from having laws and regulations that limit reproductive health services for women.

This federal legislation would end state laws that direct doctors to perform tests and procedures that they consider unnecessary before giving women access to reproductive health services. Doctors would also be able to prescribe and dispense medication as they deem medically appropriate.

Mayor Bronin's efforts in Hartford and Sen. Blumenthal's in Washington make women's health and safety a priority and we urge adoption of the city ordinance and federal law to help to ensure women of Connecticut receive timely, appropriate care from real doctors.

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