

## **Judiciary Committee**

Public Testimony of Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

H.B. 5414: *An Act Concerning Protections for Persons Receiving and Providing Reproductive Health Care Services in the State*

H.B. 5483: *An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Pregnancy Services Centers*

Submitted by: Madeline Granato, Policy Director

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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-eight years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate for policies that enhance women's economic security and access to justice in our state.

Through CWEALF's Legal Education Program, we provide information, education, referrals, and bilingual advocacy to the Connecticut community to ensure that all individuals in our state have access to legal justice. The majority of CWEALF's clients are low-income women with at least one dependent.

### **H.B. 5414: *An Act Concerning Protections for Persons Receiving and Providing Reproductive Health Care Services in the State* (support)**

Across the country, states are passing increasingly radical and restrictive laws designed to ban abortion outright. When states pass abortion bans, the burden is on patients (especially patients with low and moderate incomes) who will then need access to essential, time-sensitive care and providers and clinics in neighboring states who want to support abortion access.

CWEALF supports H.B. 5414, which will protect providers and patients seeking abortion care in Connecticut who might be traveling here from other states that have outlawed abortion. At a time when the Supreme Court seems poised to overturn nearly 50 years of precedent and gut the protections of *Roe v. Wade*, we also must protect those who seek abortion care and providers assisting patients in accessing abortion.

Reproductive freedom is at the core of women's economic security and ability to provide for themselves and their families. Research indicates that women who are denied access to abortion face economic hardship in the years following.<sup>1</sup> The inability to decide if and when to have children also undermines women's ability to finish high school or college. Women continue to shoulder the majority of caregiving responsibilities without the support they need to help meet the demands of school, work and family, such as access to affordable and

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Media Center. 2018. "Lack of abortion access creates economic hardships for women."  
<https://www.womensmediacenter.com/news-features/lack-of-abortion-access-creates-economic-hardships-for-women>

high quality child care, predictable schedules, paid leave and a living wage. Since educational attainment and earnings are linked, the decision of whether or not to have children affects lifetime economic stability and security. That decision can also impact a woman's choices regarding whether she is able to pursue, remain or advance in a job or career.

Research shows close to sixty percent of women seeking abortion care already have a child and that seventy five percent are poor or low income.<sup>2</sup> Women who are already struggling to stay financially afloat and support their families are the most impacted by restrictions in accessing abortion.

Abortion is legal in Connecticut and is still legal across the country. No one should have their medical history used against them in a lawsuit or legal enforcement. Patients deserve privacy, community support from their network when seeking care and a shield against enforcement from other states when they seek legal health care in Connecticut. Providers should also be able to deliver abortion care to patients without the fear of repercussions from other states' laws.

Connecticut must protect health care providers and patients who receive care within our borders from the egregious overreach of politicians in states across the country. House Bill No. 5414 works to ensure our state's laws protect people in Connecticut so that providers can continue to provide the health care that is legal in our state. Now is the time to fight back against other states' laws that target patients and providers in Connecticut and protect the providers and the patients they serve. We urge the Committee and lawmakers to pass H.B. 5414 this session.

**H.B. 5483: *An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Pregnancy Services Centers* (oppose)**

CWEALF opposes H.B. 5483. Licensed health care providers are already regulated under state and federal law. This legislation is unnecessary and we urge the Committee to reject H.B. 5483 this session.

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<sup>2</sup> National Women's Law Center. 2019. Abortion Bans are an Attack on Women's Economic Security. <https://nwlc.org/abortion-bans-are-an-attack-on-womens-economic-security/>