

**Testimony of Executive Director Steven Ettannani
New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection**

**Before the Committee on
Consumer and Worker Protection**

**Hearing on
Pregnancy Services Centers and Introduction 506**

June 21, 2022

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chair Velázquez, and members of the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection. I am Steven Ettannani, Executive Director for External Affairs at the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP). I am joined today by my colleague Michael Tiger, our General Counsel. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today before the committee on Introduction 506, relating to pregnancy services centers (PSCs).

This Administration is fully committed to protecting access to reproductive healthcare services for New Yorkers. Furthermore, we stand alongside our partners in the Council to ensure that access to reproductive health and abortion is strengthened in New York City, and that we are a haven for those in need of safe healthcare options.

Regulation of Pregnancy Services Centers

Advocates describe “crisis pregnancy centers” or “pregnancy resource centers” as facilities that focus on diverting or preventing people who are, or may be pregnant, from accessing medical care, including abortions.¹ According to advocates, these businesses accomplish this by:

- Imitating the advertising of abortion-providing health clinics;
- Locating themselves near abortion-providing health clinics;
- Providing false information about abortion to pregnant people; and
- Misleading people about how many weeks they have been pregnant.²

According to the City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health), the above tactics can endanger the health of pregnant people by leaving them unaware of their reproductive health options and misinformed about the state and health of their pregnancy. These tactics also deter people who are pregnant from accessing legitimate reproductive healthcare that they otherwise would have sought out.³

Pursuant to Local Law 17 of 2011 (LL 17), a PSC is legally defined as a business that (1) appears to be a medical facility or carries out prenatal care, and (2) is not a licensed medical facility and does not have a licensed medical provider on-site supervising services.⁴ DCWP is

¹ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/blog/what-are-crisis-pregnancy-centers>

² <https://www.nirhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/cpcreport2010.pdf>

³ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/abortion.page>

⁴ Administrative Code, [§ 20-815\(g\)](#).

empowered to inspect PSCs for disclosure requirements that state they do not have a medical provider on site and do not provide abortion care; and that they do not share health and personal information without a client's consent.

DCWP investigates and responds to every complaint that it receives about PSCs. The agency has worked with elected officials and the non-profit sector to facilitate complaints, identify potential PSCs, and inspect PSCs for potential violations. Since 2017, the agency has received 59 complaints alleging violations of the PSC Law, conducted 53 inspections, and issued 2 summonses for illegal activity by a PSC. Since 2021, we have received two complaints, and subsequent investigations determined that the facilities fell outside of the scope of the law because there were medical professionals supervising the provided services.

Introduction 506

Turning to today's legislation, Introduction 506 would require DCWP, in partnership with the Health Department and any other organization at our discretion, to submit a report on PSCs operating in New York City. The report would include information on the locations of PSCs, the services they provide, and the way they advertise themselves to the public. It would also require the City to examine the health care needs of pregnant women, the ability of PSCs to meet those needs, and the impact of PSCs on women being able to gain timely access to healthcare. DCWP would be mandated to design a survey which PSCs would voluntarily submit to inform the report. Following completion of the report, DCWP, in consultation with the Health Department, would be required to implement a media campaign to raise awareness among women about PSCs.

DCWP is committed to supporting New Yorkers' safe and timely access to all of the reproductive healthcare to which they are legally entitled. To that end, DCWP looks forward to working with the Council, as well as with our sister agency, the Health Department, to ensure that any reporting on PSCs is able to capture the vital information New Yorkers need to be well informed and that it works in concert with other reporting requirements in the Council's reproductive rights legislative package. This includes Introduction 465 sponsored by Council Member Cabán, relating to a report on the provision of medical services related to reproductive care.

Similarly, we are looking forward to working with Council to harmonize the media campaign contemplated by this bill with the ones contemplated by two other bills in this package: Introduction 478, sponsored by Council Member Hudson, relating to an outreach and education campaign on the benefits and services provided by doulas and midwives, and Introduction 474, sponsored by Council Member Hanif, relating to a public information and outreach campaign regarding safe access to reproductive health care. We believe it is important that media campaigns communicate a cohesive message to New Yorkers regarding reproductive health resources that are safe and accessible, as well as informed by the public health professionals at the Health Department.

Conclusion

Again, I would like to thank the Council for holding today's hearing and for introducing its suite of legislation relating to reproductive rights that better protect New Yorkers. I look forward to any questions you may have.