

No. 23-941

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IN THE  
**Supreme Court of the United States**

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IN RE: FIRST CHOICE WOMEN'S RESOURCE  
CENTERS, INC.,  
*Petitioner.*

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On Petition for a Writ of Mandamus  
to the United States District Court  
for the District Court of New Jersey

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**AMICI BRIEF OF THE PENNSYLVANIA  
PREGNANCY WELLNESS COLLABORATIVE,  
NEW JERSEY RIGHT TO LIFE, AND  
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF FAMILY AND  
LIFE ADVOCATES IN SUPPORT OF  
PETITIONER**

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## INTEREST OF AMICI<sup>1</sup>

*Amicus* Pennsylvania Pregnancy Wellness Collaborative (“Collaborative”) is composed of multiple faith-based pregnancy medical clinics and resource centers that provide free and low-cost services for Pennsylvania residents. The Collaborative advances the work of these pregnancy help organizations in Pennsylvania by providing a unified voice for pregnancy centers, educating their communities and legislatures, and promoting and protecting pregnancy help statewide. In addition, the Collaborative provides a much-needed shield for local pregnancy resource and medical centers facing important and sometimes threatening shifts in culture and government. Some of the centers in the Collaborative have challenged proposed legislation at the local level that would have targeted them for investigation by state officials.

*Amicus* New Jersey Right to Life Committee, Inc. (NJRTL) is the state’s largest and most active pro-life, non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting and fostering the most basic value of our society – human life. As the premier pro-life organization in New Jersey, its activities are always lawful and peaceful. NJRTL leads the effort on all public policy matters concerning the sanctity of human life at the state and federal level. NJRTL promotes, upholds, and supports

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 37.6, Amici state that no counsel for any party authored this brief in whole or in part, and no entity or person, aside from amici curiae, their members, and their counsel, made any monetary contribution toward the preparation or submission of this brief. Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 37.2, all parties have received timely notice and none objected to the filing of this brief.

reverence and respect for all innocent human life from conception to natural death, without regard to condition, or circumstances of conception, quality, age, race, religion, creed, or color, whether born or pre-born.

*Amicus* the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA) is a national legal network for pro-life pregnancy resource centers and medical clinics. Its purpose is to provide legal training, consultation, and education to its 1,700 member centers (including centers in New Jersey), over 1,400 of which operate as medical clinics providing medical services, such as ultrasound confirmation of pregnancy to mothers contemplating abortion, and STI testing and treatment. The mission of NIFLA and its members is to provide alternatives to abortion for women by offering life-affirming services.

Collectively, *Amici's* interest in submitting this brief is to demonstrate that the kind of targeting to which First Women's Resource Centers, Inc., has been subject is far from an isolated event; on the contrary, it is the product of increasing weaponized state action taken to unconstitutionally shut down the morally and religiously motivated speech and conduct in which these organizations engage.

## SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

“Abortion presents a profound moral issue on which Americans hold sharply conflicting views. Some believe fervently that a human person comes into being at conception and that abortion ends an innocent life.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org.*, 597 U.S. 215, 223-24

*Amici*, like Petitioner in this case, are non-profit entities that, for moral and religious reasons, are among those described by the Supreme Court who believe in the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception. They have devoted their time, energy, and resources to promoting, protecting, and preserving innocent human life. Yet, these deeply held moral and religious views and the work that they inform are under grave attack, not just in the instant case, but in instances increasingly occurring across the nation.

At issue in this case is an unabashed intimidation and targeting of pro-life pregnancy centers on the part of the New Jersey Attorney General through government action. While the State may wish to promote a pro-abortion agenda, it has no constitutional authority to censor and permanently silence non-governmental voices purely because they dissent from that agenda. Pro-life organizations have the constitutionally protected right to engage in pro-life speech that departs from a government's pro-abortion stance. *Agency for Int'l Dev. v. All. for Open Soc'y Int'l, Inc.*, 570 U.S. 205, 213 (2013) (It is a "basic First Amendment principle that 'freedom of speech prohibits the government from telling people what they must say.'" (quoting *Rumsfeld v. F. for Acad. & Institutional Rts., Inc.*, 547 U.S. 47, 61 (2006))); see also *Hurley v. Irish-American Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Grp. of Boston*, 515 U.S. 557, 573 (1995) ("[A] speaker has the autonomy to choose the content of his own message.").



## ARGUMENT

Pregnancy Resource Centers (PRCs) are generally faith-based non-profit organizations that provide free or nominal cost assistance to millions of women, children, and families annually, including hundreds of thousands of free ultrasounds each year (over 486,000 in 2019<sup>3</sup>) along with medical services, education, and referrals. In New Jersey alone, PRCs helped “35,138 women, men, youth, and families in 2019, [by] providing free services and materials valued at nearly \$3 million.”<sup>4</sup> These services “included 5,614 free ultrasounds performed by registered nurses or medical sonographers and 9,431 free pregnancy tests.”<sup>5</sup>

Also in 2019, over 10,000 licensed medical professionals served as paid or volunteer workers in 2,700 PRCs across the United States.<sup>6</sup> Thousands more people serve voluntarily at PRCs on an annual basis.<sup>7</sup> In fact, PRCs save taxpayers countless millions of dollars each year because of the services that they provide for free—through the work of volunteers and the support of donors—that would

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<sup>3</sup> Moira Gaul, *Fact Sheet: Pregnancy Centers – Serving Women and Saving Lives (2020 Study)*, Charlotte Lozier Inst. (July 19, 2021), <https://lozierinstitute.org/fact-sheet-pregnancy-centers-serving-women-and-saving-lives-2020>.

<sup>4</sup> *Community Impact: New Jersey Pro-Life Pregnancy Centers Served 35,138 in 2019*, Charlotte Lozier Inst. (Feb. 15, 2023), <https://lozierinstitute.org/community-impact-new-jersey-pro-life-pregnancy-centers-served-35138-in-2019/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Fact Sheet: Pregnancy Centers*, *supra* note 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

otherwise have to be provided by government agencies through publicly funded programs.<sup>8</sup>

These PRCs, and the medical professionals and workers that staff them, also provide invaluable information and resources that help ensure that a woman is *fully aware* of all the facts and options available to her—allowing her to make a *true* choice. Consistent with their moral and religious views that pre-born life is sacred and valuable, PRCs provide facts about abortion, including the fact that abortion is an act that is intended to end the life of a pre-born child,<sup>9</sup> and that abortion is a grave, gruesome, and irreversible act.<sup>10</sup> The descriptions of abortion procedures in *Gonzales* show how gruesome these procedures can be. 550 U.S. at 134. “Abortion methods vary depending to some extent on the preferences of the physician and, of course, on the term of the pregnancy and the resulting stage of the unborn child’s development.” *Id.* (describing the variations in method). For example,

[t]he most common [surgical] first-trimester abortion method is vacuum aspiration (otherwise known as suction curettage) in which the physician vacuums out the embryonic tissue . . . . The doctor, often guided by ultrasound, inserts grasping forceps through the woman’s cervix and into the uterus to grab the fetus. The doctor grips a fetal part with the

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Gonzales v. Carhart*, 550 U.S. 124, 134 (2007) (“The Act proscribes a particular manner of ending fetal life . . .”).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

forceps and pulls it back through the cervix and vagina, continuing to pull even after meeting resistance from the cervix. The friction causes the fetus to tear apart. For example, a leg might be ripped off the fetus as it is pulled through the cervix and out of the woman. The process of evacuating the fetus piece by piece continues until it has been completely removed.

*Id.* at 134-36 (describing suction curettage abortion).  
Further,

[s]ome doctors, especially later in the second trimester, may kill the fetus a day or two before performing the surgical evacuation. They inject digoxin or potassium chloride into the fetus, the umbilical cord, or the amniotic fluid. Fetal demise may cause contractions and make greater dilation possible. Once dead, moreover, the fetus' body will soften, and its removal will be easier. . . . The abortion procedure that was the impetus for the numerous bans on "partial-birth abortion," including the Act, is a variation of this standard D&E.

*Id.* at 136 (describing the practice of abortion by injection before the surgical intervention). A nurse's testimony before Congress describes the gruesomeness of these procedures:

"Dr. Haskell went in with forceps and grabbed the baby's legs and pulled them down into the birth canal. Then he delivered the baby's body and the arms—everything but the head. The

doctor kept the head right inside the uterus. . . .

“The baby’s little fingers were clasping and unclasping, and his little feet were kicking. Then the doctor stuck the scissors in the back of his head, and the baby’s arms jerked out, like a startle reaction, like a flinch, like a baby does when he thinks he is going to fall.

“The doctor opened up the scissors, stuck a high-powered suction tube into the opening, and sucked the baby’s brains out. Now the baby went completely limp. . . .

“He cut the umbilical cord and delivered the placenta. He threw the baby in a pan, along with the placenta and the instruments he had just used.”

*Id.* at 138-39.

A woman’s decision regarding abortion should be fully informed and should be made only after careful consideration of all the facts. *Planned Parenthood of Se. Pa. v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833, 882 (1992) (plurality opinion) (“[E]nsur[ing] that a woman apprehend[s] the full consequences of her decision . . . reduce[s] the risk that a woman may elect an abortion, only to discover later, with devastating psychological consequences, that her decision was not fully informed.”); accord *Planned Parenthood of Cent. Mo. v. Danforth*, 428 U.S. 52, 67 (1976) (“The decision to abort, indeed, is an important, and often a stressful one, and it is desirable and imperative that it be made with full knowledge of its nature and consequences.”).

In pro-abortion states, the moral and religious objections that these PRCs have to abortion, and their determination to share information regarding the

negative consequences of abortion, may be at odds with the views of state lawmakers and officials who are pursuing a policy of abortion on demand.<sup>11</sup>

While this has long been true, after this Court’s decision in *Dobbs*, where it rightly rejected a constitutional right to abortion,<sup>12</sup> there is a growing nation-wide trend of policymakers and government officials invoking investigatory powers, executive orders, and legislation to censor unconstitutionally PRCs, such as the ones at the center of this case—First Choice Women’s Resource Centers, Inc.

### **A. Federal Level Efforts to Restrict or Eliminate Pregnancy Centers.**

In the wake of the leaked draft decision in *Dobbs*, PRCs have experienced an increase in violence against them, including firebombing and vandalism.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See *i.e.*, Press Release, Acting AG Platkin Establishes “Reproductive Rights Strike Force” to Protect Access to Abortion Care for New Jerseyans and Residents of Other States, Office of the Attorney General (Jul. 11, 2022), <https://www.njoag.gov/acting-ag-platkin-establishes-reproductive-rights-strike-force-to-protect-access-to-abortion-care-for-new-jerseyans-and-residents-of-other-states> (“But make no mistake: Abortion remains legal in New Jersey. The Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act, signed into law this January by Governor Murphy, protects the right to choose to terminate a pregnancy in New Jersey. And legislation signed into law by Governor Murphy earlier this month provides additional critical protections for individuals who seek to access reproductive health care services in New Jersey. The Strike Force we are creating today will ensure that these laws are enforced to the full extent possible, and that we use every available resource to protect access to abortion care in New Jersey.”).

<sup>12</sup> 597 U.S. 215.

<sup>13</sup> Emma Colton, *New York Pro-Life Pregnancy Center Allegedly*

Despite these violent attacks,<sup>14</sup> PRCs received little to no support from pro-abortion politicians, and were instead subjected to public defamation and calls for their censorship and closure.

On June 17, 2022, pro-abortion members of Congress sent a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of Google.<sup>15</sup> In that letter, Members of Congress referred to “crisis pregnancy centers,” or “pregnancy resource centers,” as “fake clinics.”<sup>16</sup> The letter also called on Google to, *inter alia*, “limit the appearance of . . . fake clinics or so-called ‘crisis pregnancy centers’ in Google search results, Google Ads, and on Google Maps . . . .”<sup>17</sup>

Senator Elizabeth Warren made a series of remarks regarding PRCs: “We need to shut them down here in Massachusetts, and we need to shut them down all around the country.”<sup>18</sup> She accused PRCs of “[d]eceiving people in order to provide

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*‘Firebombed’ by Left-Wing Group, Investigation Launched*, FOX NEWS (Jun. 7, 2022, 3:51 PM), <https://www.foxnews.com/us/pro-life-pregnancy-firebombed-left-wing>; Jessica Chasmar, *At Least 5 Pro-Life Pregnancy Centers Vandalized Within a Week of SCOTUS Opinion Leak*, FOX NEWS (May 11, 2022, 1:37 PM), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/5-pro-life-pregnancy-centers-vandalized-scotus-leak>.

<sup>14</sup> *Attacks Since Supreme Court Leak: 88*, CatholicVote.org, <https://catholicvote.org/pregnancy-center-attack-tracker/> (last updated Jan. 28, 2024).

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Members of Congress to Sundar Pichai, Chief Executive Officer of Alphabet, Inc. (June 17, 2022), <https://tinyurl.com/4u2rpek4>.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> Isabel Brown, *Senator Elizabeth Warren Calls for Crisis Pregnancy Centers to be Shut Down*, Turning Point USA (July 15, 2022), <https://www.tpusa.com/live/senator-elizabeth-warren-calls-for-crisis-pregnancy-centers-to-be-shut-down>.

services,” “[springing] up to prey on people who are pregnant and vulnerable and seek[ing] help . . . ,”<sup>19</sup> and of “wish[ing] [women] harm,”<sup>20</sup> stating that “[PRCs] should not be able to torture a pregnant person like that.”<sup>21</sup>

U.S. Representative Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey requested that the Biden Administration, through the implementation of a proposed rule, defund PRCs, claiming that “[PRCs] masquerade as healthcare providers . . . to divert women away from *real* healthcare clinics,”<sup>22</sup> asserting that PRCs are engaged in “[d]eceptive practices,” and “disseminating inaccurate medical misinformation.”<sup>23</sup> Rep. Gottheimer has also stated, with reference to PRCs, “We need to do everything we can to shut down these brainwashing cult clinics, and they are brainwashing cult clinics.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kate Selig & Stephanie Ebbert, *Elizabeth Warren Calls for Action Against ‘Crisis Pregnancy Centers’ in Wake of Supreme Court Overturning Roe*, *The Boston Globe* (June 29, 2022, 4:34 PM), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/29/metro/elizabeth-warren-calls-action-against-crisis-pregnancy-centers-wake-scotus-overturning-roe/>.

<sup>20</sup> @RNC Research, X (formerly known as Twitter) (July 6, 2022, 11:39 AM), <https://tinyurl.com/yc528w6n>.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, *supra* note 18.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Josh Gottheimer and Angie Craig, Representatives, United States House of Representatives, to Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Jan. 22, 2024), [https://d12t4t5x3vyizu.cloudfront.net/gottheimer.house.gov/uploads/2024/01/Letter-Crisis-Pregnancy-Centers\\_TANF-Final-.pdf](https://d12t4t5x3vyizu.cloudfront.net/gottheimer.house.gov/uploads/2024/01/Letter-Crisis-Pregnancy-Centers_TANF-Final-.pdf) (emphasis added).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> Henry Rosoff, *Congressman Calls for Crackdown on ‘Brainwashing’ Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, *PIX 11* (Oct. 6, 2023, 7:53 PM), <https://pix11.com/news/local-news/congressmen-calls->

In April 2023, U.S. Representatives Emilia Strong Sykes (D-OH) and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced legislation targeted at PRCs in an effort to chill their pro-life speech.<sup>25</sup> They introduced legislation, endorsed by major pro-abortion organizations such as NARAL Pro-Choice America, titled the “Stop Anti-Abortion Disinformation (SAD) Act.” The proposed legislation would direct the “Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to prohibit unfair or deceptive advertising related to the provision of abortion services and authorize[] the FTC to enforce these rules and collect penalties from organizations in violation.”<sup>26</sup>

In addition to these political slurs and attacks on PRCs, President Biden issued an Executive Order on July 8, 2022, calling on the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Attorney General, and the Chair of the FTC to “address deceptive or fraudulent practices related to reproductive healthcare

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for-crackdown-on-brainwashing-crisis-pregnancy-centers/.

<sup>25</sup> Press Release, Rep. Sykes Introduces Legislation to Crack Down on Anti-Abortion Disinformation by Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Congresswoman Emilia Sykes (Apr. 20, 2023), <https://sykes.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-sykes-introduces-legislation-crack-down-anti-abortion-disinformation>.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.* While prohibiting deceptive advertising in the abortion market would make sense if targeted at abortion businesses that profit from more abortions, S. 1231 actually exempts abortion businesses by applying only to those who *do not* provide or refer for abortion. SAD Act, S. 1231, 118th Cong. (2023), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1231/text>. The bill thus targets those who have *no* financial incentive to deceive women, while giving a pass to those who do.



services,”<sup>27</sup> language, as detailed above, that is frequently used in direct reference to PRCs.

### **B. State Level Efforts to Restrict or Eliminate Pregnancy Resource Centers.**

On October 23, 2023, sixteen state attorneys general issued a joint letter, headed by Rob Bonta, Attorney General of California, entitled “Open Letter From Attorneys General Regarding CPC Misinformation and Harm.”<sup>28</sup> The letter was joined by the attorneys general of Connecticut, Michigan, Delaware, Minnesota, District of Columbia, New Jersey, Hawaii, New Mexico, Maine, New York, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.<sup>29</sup>

In the letter, the attorneys general wrote:

We have watched with increasing concern in recent years as anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) have proliferated in our states, outnumbering abortion clinics by a three-to-one ratio, while *misleading consumers and delaying access* to critical, time-sensitive reproduction healthcare. . . . and *often use deceptive tactics to lure in patients*

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<sup>27</sup> Exec. Order No. 14,076, 87 Fed. Reg. 42,053 (July 8, 2022), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2022-07-13/pdf/2022-15138.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Sixteen Attorneys General, Open Letter From Attorneys General Regarding CPC Misinformation and Harm (Oct. 23, 2023), <https://tinyurl.com/56ptjxby>.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

*seeking reproductive healthcare.* These tactics can have dire health consequences and rob patients of their healthcare choices.<sup>30</sup>

In supporting the statements made in the letter, the attorneys general relied heavily on studies conducted by some of the Nation’s largest pro-abortion organizations,<sup>31</sup> such as NARAL Pro-Choice America<sup>32</sup> and the American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the letter discusses a report conducted by The Alliance: State Advocates for Women’s Rights & Gender Equality,<sup>34</sup> an

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<sup>30</sup> *Id.* (emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> *About Us*, Reproductive Freedom for All, <https://reproductivefreedomforall.org/about/> (Mar. 26, 2024); Kimberlee Kruesi, *Abortion-rights Group Rebrands to Reproductive Freedom for All in Post-Roe World*, Associated Press (Sept. 20, 2023, 1:50 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/abortion-advocates-rebrand-naral-reproductive-freedom-ccd0d424a5578aad9d7ce0dc9151afc9>.

<sup>33</sup> *Understanding ACOG’s Policy on Abortion*, The Am. Coll. of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (Sept. 22, 2023), <https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2023/09/understanding-acog-policy-on-abortion>. See Carole Novielli, *The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Isn’t Neutral. It’s Pro-abortion*, Live Action (Aug. 9, 2018), <https://www.liveaction.org/news/american-college-obstetricians-gynecologists-pro-abortion/> (with extensive documentation).

<sup>34</sup> *We Are the Alliance: States Advocates for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality*, Alliance State Advocates, <https://alliancestateadvocates.org/> (last visited Mar. 26, 2024); *Our Work*, Alliance State Advocates, [https://alliancestateadvocates.org/resources/?resource\\_tax=reproductive-rhj](https://alliancestateadvocates.org/resources/?resource_tax=reproductive-rhj) (click “Advancing Reproductive Rights, Health, and Justice) (last visited Mar. 26, 2024).

organization driven by the pro-abortion groups Gender Justice,<sup>35</sup> Legal Voice,<sup>36</sup> Southwest Women’s Law Group, and Women’s Law Project.<sup>37</sup>

Notably, The Alliance itself states, as a “key context and additional finding” to the reports it issued, that “(CPCs are) ‘unfortunately capitalizing on a gap that we have in our system *in terms of responding to the actual real needs of pregnant folks and the actual real needs of families.*’”<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, the attorneys general who signed onto the letter, and other state actors, have launched attacks on the PRCs within their states, specifically targeting the speech of PRCs.

In California, Attorney General Bonta is suing Heartbeat International, a national pro-life organization, and RealOptions Obria, a chain of five PRCs. “The lawsuit alleges that the two organizations used fraudulent and misleading claims to advertise an unproven and largely experimental procedure called ‘abortion pill reversal (APR).’”<sup>39</sup> In bringing this

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<sup>35</sup> *Our Work*, Gender Justice, <https://www.genderjustice.us/our-work/> (click “what we fight for”) (last visited Mar. 26, 2024).

<sup>36</sup> *Our Work*, Legal Voice, <https://legalvoice.org/our-work/> (last visited Mar. 26, 2024).

<sup>37</sup> *About*, Women’s Law Project, <https://tinyurl.com/2pveh4dn> (last visited Mar. 26, 2024).

<sup>38</sup> *Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, Alliance State Advocates, <https://alliancestateadvocates.org/crisis-pregnancy-centers/> (last visited Mar. 27, 2024) (emphasis added).

<sup>39</sup> Press Release, Attorney General Bonta Sues Anti-Abortion Group, Five California Crisis Pregnancy Centers for Misleading Patients, Office of the Attorney General (Sept. 21, 2023), <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-bonta-sues-anti-abortion-group-five-california-crisis-pregnancy>. In fact, the science supports the abortion pill reversal (APR) protocol. See *Abortion Pill Reversal: A Record of Safety and*

civil lawsuit, Attorney General Bonta alleges that the defendants violated Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17500 et seq., by “making or causing to be made untrue or misleading statements with the intent to induce members of the public to undergo APR,”<sup>40</sup> and Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq., by “engag[ing] in and continu[ing] to engage in, aid[ing] and abet[ing] and continu[ing] to aid and abet, and conspire[ing] to and continu[ing] to conspire to engage in unlawful, unfair, and/or fraudulent acts or practices, which constitute unfair competition . . . .”<sup>41</sup>

In addition, Attorney General Bonta issued a “Consumer Alert,” warning Californians about PRCs and soliciting complaints against them,<sup>42</sup> claiming that PRCs “may provide inaccurate health information about a person’s pregnancy and other aspects of reproductive healthcare,” and “may attempt to delay appointments or provide

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*Efficacy*, Charlotte Lozier Institute (Sept. 24, 2021) (“Progesterone has been shown to help reduce the risk of miscarriages and lower the rates of preterm birth. APR is a cutting-edge application of this time-tested, FDA-approved treatment used for decades to provide women who regret taking the first abortion pill with a chance to reverse the effects and ultimately save their pregnancies.”).

<sup>40</sup> Complaint for Permanent Injunction, Civil Penalties, and Other Equitable Relief at 26, *People v. Heartbeat Int’l, Inc.*, No. 23CV044940 (Cal. Super. Ct. Sept. 21, 2023), <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/Complaint.pdf.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.* at 27.

<sup>42</sup> Press Release, Attorney General Bonta Issues Consumer Alert Warning Californians That Crisis Pregnancy Centers Do Not Offer Abortion or Comprehensive Reproductive Care, Office of the Attorney General (June 1, 2022), <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-bonta-issues-consumer-alert-warning-californians-crisis>.

misinformation about the legality or safety of abortions.”<sup>43</sup>

In Colorado, the governor signed into law Colorado SB23-190, “Deceptive Trade Practice Pregnancy-related Service Act,” that specifically regulates the ability of pro-life (indeed *any*) health-care provider to “provide[], proscribe[], administer[], or attempt[] medication abortion reversal” within Colorado.<sup>44</sup>

In Connecticut, the governor signed into law S.B. No. 835, “An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers,”<sup>45</sup> broadly regulating PRCs by preventing them from making any public statement “that is deceptive, whether by statement or omission, . . . that a [PRC] knows or reasonably should know to be deceptive.”<sup>46</sup> The law further allowed the Connecticut Attorney General to pursue action against a PRC that could include a court order to, *inter alia*, require the PRC to “[p]ay for and disseminate appropriate corrective advertising,” or “[p]ost a remedial notice that corrects the effects of the deceptive advertising . . . .”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Id.* Of course, misinformation about the safety of abortion is rampant in advocacy *for* abortion. See Amicus Brief of the Elliot Institute in Support of Petitioners, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, 597 U.S. 215 (2022) (No. 19-1392) (refuting claim that abortion is safer than continuing pregnancy). The abortion movement shows no signs of policing its own on such false claims.

<sup>44</sup> SB23-190, Deceptive Trade Practice Pregnancy-related Service (2023), <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb23-190>.

<sup>45</sup> Public Act No. 21-17, An Act Concerning Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers (2021), <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/ACT/PA/PDF/2021PA-00017-R00SB-00835-PA.PDF>.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

Illinois adopted a similar law, S.B. 1909, the “Deceptive Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers Act,”<sup>48</sup> which was backed by Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul.<sup>49</sup> This law targets public statements by PRCs and grants the state’s attorney general the ability to prosecute PRCs for “consumer fraud.”<sup>50</sup> The law was immediately challenged, and the state ultimately agreed to a permanent injunction, “enjoin[ing] it from enforcing” the newly enacted sections of the law against the challenging PRCs.<sup>51</sup>

In Maine, a pro-abortion state representative proposed a bill entitled “An Act to Prohibit Deceptive

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<sup>48</sup> SB1909, Deceptive Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers Act (2023), <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/103/SB/10300SB1909.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> Press Release, Attorney General Raoul Applauds Governor Pritzker for Signing Legislation to Address Deceptive Practices by Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Office of the Illinois Attorney General (July 27, 2023), <https://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/news/story/attorney-general-raoul-applauds-governor-pritzker-for-signing-legislation-to-address-deceptive-practices-by-crisis-pregnancy-centers>; *see also* Press Release, Attorney General Raoul Applauds House Committee Passage of Legislation to Address Deceptive Practices by Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Office of the Illinois Attorney General (Apr. 25, 2023), <https://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/news/story/attorney-general-raoul-applauds-house-committee-passage-of-legislation-to-address-deceptive-practices-by-crisis-pregnancy-centers> (“Attorney General Kwame Raoul applauded a House committee’s passage of his legislation to hold crisis pregnancy centers that engage in deceptive practices accountable.”).

<sup>50</sup> SB1909, *supra* note 48.

<sup>51</sup> *NIFLA v. Raoul*, Order, Case No. 3:23-cv-50279 at 1 (N.D. Ill. 2023), <https://news.wttw.com/sites/default/files/article/file-attachments/Limited%20Service%20Pregnancy%20Crisis%20Center%20Final%20Order.pdf>.

Advertising in Limited Pregnancy Services Centers.” Had the law been passed, it would have allowed the state attorney general to pursue action against a PRC, and, in terms nearly identical to the Connecticut law, obtain a court order forcing the PRC to “[d]isseminate, or pay for the dissemination of, information that corrects the information identified to be deceptive or misleading,” and/or “[p]ost, in locations determined by the court, a remedial notice that corrects the effects of the information to be deceptive or misleading . . . .”<sup>52</sup>

Via a consumer alert, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison accused PRCs of “misleading, misinforming, or deceiving people.”<sup>53</sup> He also claimed that “crisis pregnancy centers often do not offer the services they claim to offer, and that the information about abortion and contraception they offer may be inaccurate or misleading.”<sup>54</sup> His office also claimed that “[c]risis pregnancy centers often target pregnant people who are low-income, who may have less access to healthcare and are more likely to lack health insurance than pregnant people with median or above-median incomes.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> H.P. 723, An Act to Prohibit Deceptive Advertising in Limited Pregnancy Services Centers, 131st Leg., First Reg. Sess. (Me. 2023), <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP0723&item=1&snum=131>.

<sup>53</sup> Press Release, Attorney General Ellison Issues Consumer Alert About Crisis Pregnancy Centers, The Office of Minnesota Attorney General (Aug. 22, 2022), [https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Office/Communications/2022/08/23\\_CrisisPregnancyCenters.asp](https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Office/Communications/2022/08/23_CrisisPregnancyCenters.asp).

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin issued a “consumer alert,” warning that “Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) . . . are organizations that seek to prevent people from accessing comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care and contraception.”<sup>56</sup> The alert further asserted that “CPCs may also provide false or misleading information about abortion—including the physical and mental health effects of abortion—to deter people from choosing abortion.”<sup>57</sup> Finally, the alert provides information about how to file a complaint about a PRC with the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the investigation at issue in this case and consumer alert, New Jersey Assemblywomen have introduced a bill to “make it a crime under the state’s Consumer Fraud Act for crisis pregnancy centers to use deceptive or misleading advertising to lure pregnant people through their doors.”<sup>59</sup> “The bill would authorize the Attorney General’s Office to seek a court order prohibiting violators from advertising or providing services.”<sup>60</sup> Another similar bill has also

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<sup>56</sup> Consumer Alert: Crisis Pregnancy Centers, New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, [https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases22/2022-1207\\_crisis-pregnancy-centers.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases22/2022-1207_crisis-pregnancy-centers.pdf) (last visited Mar. 26, 2024).

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> Dana Difilippo, *Deceptive Marketing by Crisis Pregnancy Centers Prompts Bills, Consumer Alert*, N.J. Monitor (Jan. 17, 2023, 6:53 AM), <https://newjerseymonitor.com/2023/01/17/deceptive-marketing-by-crisis-pregnancy-centers-prompts-bills-consumer-alert>.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*



been introduced. Bill A861 of the 2024-2025 session proposes to make it:

an unlawful practice for a crisis pregnancy center to:

(1) make, publish, disseminate, circulate, or place before the public, or cause, directly or indirectly, to be made, published, disseminated, circulated, or placed before the public, in a newspaper, magazine, or other publication, or in the form of a notice, circular, pamphlet, letter, or poster, or over any radio station, or via the Internet, or in any other way, an advertisement, announcement, or statement containing any assertion, representation, or statement with respect to pregnancy-related services or the provision of pregnancy-related services which is untrue, deceptive, or misleading; or

(2) make false or misleading statements about, or misrepresent the center's intent to provide, pregnancy-related services.<sup>61</sup>

“[W]hen it shall appear to the Attorney General that a crisis pregnancy center is about to engage in, is continuing to engage in, or has engaged in conduct which is in violation” of the above, this bill would give the Attorney General the ability to seek an injunction in the Superior Court to “prohibit[] the crisis pregnancy center from advertising or providing peer-related counseling services” and to seek a court order to require the PRC “to take whatever remedial steps

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<sup>61</sup> NJ A861, 221st Leg., 2024 Sess. (N.J. 2024), <https://legiscan.com/NJ/text/A861/id/2888363>.

the court deems necessary to correct the adverse effects of the center’s untrue, deceptive, false, or misleading advertising or statements on any client seeking pregnancy-related services.”<sup>62</sup>

In 2022, New York passed a measure to authorize “health officials . . . review[] [of] the services provided by facilities in New York that offer pregnancy-related care, but stop short of providing access to abortions or contraceptives.”<sup>63</sup> Specially, it

[a]uthorizes the commissioner of health to conduct a study and issue a report examining the unmet health and resource needs facing pregnant women in New York and the impact of limited service pregnancy centers on the ability of women to obtain accurate, non-coercive health care information and timely access to a comprehensive range of reproductive and sexual health care services.<sup>64</sup>

Amongst other data that the study was authorized to compile was “the nature of information given to clients or potential clients at pregnancy centers and the nature of limited service pregnancy centers’ operational manuals, handbooks or guidelines in connection to the provision of services to clients.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> Nick Reisman, *Anti-Abortion Pregnancy Centers Face Scrutiny in New York*, Spectrum Local News (June 22, 2022, 11:09 AM), <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/ny-state-of-politics/2022/06/20/anti-abortion-pregnancy-centers-face-scrutiny-in-new-york>.

<sup>64</sup> SB470, 2021-2022 Sess. (N.Y. 2022), <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S470>.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

This law was used to initiate an investigation against CompassCare Pregnancy Services, a PRC which had been the victim of a fire bomb attack.<sup>66</sup> “[P]ro-life centers are being targeted and investigated simply for *not committing or referring for abortions*.”<sup>67</sup>

In Pennsylvania, the attorney general issued a “warning” regarding pregnancy resource centers.<sup>68</sup> According to the attorney general’s official website, crisis pregnancy centers or pregnancy resource centers “are not staffed by licensed medical professionals and therefore cannot provide medical care.”<sup>69</sup> Though not explicitly labeled as a “consumer alert,” the attorney general encouraged consumers not to go to pregnancy resource centers and suggested that such centers will not provide accurate information.<sup>70</sup>

In Washington, the attorney general issued civil investigative demands to pregnancy centers.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Carole Novielli, *Now Under Attack, NY Pregnancy Centers Provided Nearly \$4M in Free Services in One Year*, Live Action (July 8, 2022, 5:34 PM), <https://www.liveaction.org/news/new-york-pregnancy-centers-4-million-services/>.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> Press Release, *AG Henry Encourages Pennsylvanians to Seek Information From Providers to Make Informed Pregnancy-Related Health Care Choices*, Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General (Nov. 24, 2023), <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/taking-action/ag-henry-encourages-pennsylvanians-to-seek-information-from-providers-to-make-informed-pregnancy-related-health-care-choices/>.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

<sup>71</sup> Michael Gryboski, *Pro-life Christian Nonprofits Sue Washington State AG Over Private Records Investigation*, The Christian Post (Dec. 4, 2023), <https://www.christianpost.com/news/pro-life-nonprofits-sue->

Without citing to any customer complaints or other evidence, he launched this investigation, which even required records going far beyond the statute of limitations.<sup>72</sup> These demands required the pregnancy centers to spend a great amount of time and financial resources to try to comply with the attorney general's unreasonable requests.<sup>73</sup> The PRC Obria Group has been targeted by one of these investigations, sustaining additional harm by its insurance agency stating that it will not extend or renew Obria's policy because it cannot secure an underwriter "as a direct result of Attorney General Ferguson's CIDs."<sup>74</sup> These centers are now seeking relief from these unconstitutional searches.<sup>75</sup>

In May 2023, Vermont adopted Act 15, legislation that protects abortion and sex-change procedures.<sup>76</sup> This law censors PRCs' abilities to advertise services and prevents PRCs from offering non-medical services, information, and counseling unless provided by a licensed health care provider.<sup>77</sup>

These are just a few of the state legislative efforts

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wash-ag-over-private-records-query.html.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> *Id.*

<sup>74</sup> Pl.'s Notice of Suppl. Information at \*1, *Obria Group, Inc. v. Ferguson*, 3:23-cv-06093-TMC (W.D.Wash. Mar. 22, 2024), [https://www.pacermonitor.com/public/case/51527267/Obria\\_Group\\_Inc\\_et\\_al\\_v\\_Robert\\_Ferguson](https://www.pacermonitor.com/public/case/51527267/Obria_Group_Inc_et_al_v_Robert_Ferguson).

<sup>75</sup> Michael Gryboski, *supra* note 71.

<sup>76</sup> Brooke Migdon, *Vermont Governor Signs Bills Protecting Access to Abortion, Gender-Affirming Care*, The Hill (May 10, 2023, 4:32 PM), <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/3998504-vermont-governor-signs-bills-protecting-access-to-abortion-gender-affirming-care/>.

<sup>77</sup> Kurt Jensen, *Suit Filed Against Vermont Over New Mandates For Pregnancy Resource Centers*, OSV News (July 31, 2023),

that have been undertaken in recent years to bully PRCs and target them for investigations and censorship of their morally and religiously motivated pro-life speech.

**C. If This Court Declines to Hear This Case, It Will Embolden Other Pro-Abortion Attorneys General to Take Similar State Action Against PRCs to Shut Down Dissenting Pro-Life Voices.**

While some of the states' actions described above have undergone or are currently undergoing legal challenges, they serve to illustrate a pervasive effort on the part of pro-abortion state governments to target PRCs with action that serves to, among other things, chill their morally and religiously informed speech concerning abortion. Adam Edelman, *Democrats Eye a New Approach to Rein In Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, NBC News (May 18, 2023, 2:06 PM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/democrats-eye-new-approach-rein-crisis-pregnancy-centers-rcna81603> (“Hampered by the Broader legal landscape, Democratic state lawmakers have introduced or advanced at least 26 bills in their 2023 legislative sessions that seek to regulate [Pregnancy Resource Centers] in far more targeted ways . . . . Lawmakers wary of legal challenges in the mold of those made against the Connecticut and California laws have also – in New Jersey, California and other states – issued consumer alerts . . . . Such

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<https://www.osvnews.com/2023/07/31/suit-filed-against-vermont-over-new-mandates-for-pregnancy-resource-centers/>.

alerts urge consumers to file complaints with certain state officials . . .”).

Legislative efforts to regulate the pro-life speech of PRCs have been met with legal challenges, which has been noticed by states attempting to pass legislation similar to those already being challenged in other states. For example, in a recent legal opinion authored by the New Jersey State Legislature’s Office of Legislative Services (OLS), the OLS noted that “A861 is particularly similar to the overturned Illinois statute, as well as the Massachusetts, Vermont, and North Carolina bills, in seeking to regulate the speech of crisis pregnancy centers using consumer fraud laws.”<sup>78</sup>

In that opinion, the OLS concluded that “A861 [which] prohibits nonprofit, pro-life crisis pregnancy centers from making false or misleading advertisements or other such communications about abortion,”<sup>79</sup> would “likely be ruled unconstitutional, due to it not being narrowly tailored, or serving a compelling interest that is actually, and not hypothetically, under threat by false or misleading crisis pregnancy center speech.”<sup>80</sup>

In supporting this conclusion, the OLS reasoned that “A861 potentially implicates the right of free speech . . . under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, in that it seeks to regulate certain speech based on its content . . . and the identity of its

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<sup>78</sup> Letter from Gabriel R. Neville, Legislative Counsel, New Jersey State Legislature Office of Legislative Services, to Jay Webber, Assemblyman, New Jersey General Assembly, (Feb. 21, 2024), at 4, <http://media.aclj.org/pdf/I.O.-1551.pdf>.

<sup>79</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Id.* at 2.

speaker (i.e., a ‘crisis pregnancy center’),”<sup>81</sup> and that one of the limitations on A861 passing constitutional muster is that it likely does not regulate commercial speech:

In Greater Balto., 879 F.3d at 106, 108, the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the plaintiff, a nonprofit crisis pregnancy center that advertised the services it offered without “expressly broadcast[ing] its religious opposition to abortion,” was not engaging in commercial speech because “[a] morally and religiously motivated offering of free services cannot be described as a bare ‘commercial transaction.’”<sup>82</sup>

This OLS opinion demonstrates some of the constitutional defects of legislation to limit and silence the pro-life speech of PRCs. It also demonstrates why pro-abortion attorneys general may attempt to use strategies similar to the ones at issue in this case, especially if the lower court’s ruling is allowed to stand and PRCs are limited in their ability to legally challenge unconstitutional restrictions on their morally and religiously motivated speech in opposition to abortion.

Pro-abortion states and officials have multiple ways to advance their pro-abortion agenda. Trampling on the First Amendment’s guarantee of free speech and religion, under the false guise of enforcing consumer fraud laws, is not one of them.

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<sup>81</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Id.* at 5.

**CONCLUSION**

*Amici curiae* respectfully request that this Court grant the Petition.

Respectfully submitted.

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