

PLANNED PARENTHOOD ADVOCATES OF WISCONSIN

To: Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature
From: Nicole Safar
Re: Oppose LRB 1745, Honoring "Pregnancy Care Centers"
Date: April 25, 2011

A resolution commending so-called "pregnancy care centers" operating in Wisconsin is currently being circulated. What the resolution fails to disclose is that these pregnancy care centers:

- **DO NOT** provide any actual women's health services beyond drug-store pregnancy tests.
- **ARE NOT** staffed by licensed medical professionals, even though they falsely advertise themselves as health care facilities.
- **ARE NOT** regulated either in the content of the "medical" advice or referrals they provide women.

The resolution honors these anti-abortion organizations and proclaims October as Pregnancy Care month. However, if Sen. Kapanke and Rep. Jaque were truly concerned about the health of women, pregnant women and families, they would oppose the draconian cuts to women's health and BadgerCare in Governor Walker's budget instead of passing resolutions honoring organizations that do nothing to solve the health care crisis so many families are facing right now.

These organizations do not provide women's health services.

Pregnancy care centers or crisis pregnancy centers as they are sometimes called include over 100 organizations throughout Wisconsin that falsely advertise themselves as health care facilities. These facilities are not licensed medical centers and do not meet the health care needs of the women they target. Women looking for comprehensive medical care, especially those who may not have access to private insurance, often seek help at pregnancy care centers because they have seen false advertisements of "free" health care. When women arrive at these facilities they do not find actual health care services provided by a nurse or physician. While they may get a free drug-store pregnancy test and in some cases an ultrasound, women do not receive physical exams, STD treatment, birth control counseling or prenatal care coordination.

Because pregnancy care centers are not health care entities and do not employ health care professionals, they are not required to comply with medical ethics or operate under Wisconsin's informed consent law.

These facilities are run by anti-abortion organizations that deceptively market themselves as professional health facilities. Instead of providing women's health care services, staff or volunteers at these facilities give women medically inaccurate and biased information through intimidation, deceit, fear, and shaming tactics. The vast majority of staff at these organizations are not medical professionals and are not licensed to provide health care services in Wisconsin.

The information they provide is unregulated, biased and oftentimes completely false. As mentioned early, staff at these facilities offer women medically inaccurate or incomplete information and often use intimidation tactics to dissuade women from obtaining abortions, sometimes withholding essential medically accurate reproductive health information. In Wisconsin, where many of these organizations are also against all forms of contraception, pregnancy care center staff discourage women from using birth control, giving them false medical advice and leaving them vulnerable to unintended pregnancy.

In reality, pregnancy care centers or crisis pregnancy centers do nothing to keep women and pregnant women healthy. Instead, a woman's health is often put at-risk by staff who are opposed to all forms of contraception and focus on pushing an anti-abortion agenda instead of listening to the needs and concerns of the patient who oftentimes need real reproductive health care services like STD testing and well-woman exams.

Protect Real Women's Health Centers that provide care for over 30,000 Wisconsin Women

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin (PPWI) is the state's oldest, largest and most trusted reproductive health care provider, serving over 73,000 women, men and teens every year. For the last 75 years, PPWI has been there offering basic women's health care services to patients regardless of their insurance status or income level. In 2010 at PPWI's 27 health centers, we provided 77,000 breast and cervical cancer screenings, 752 colposcopies, 62,000 STD screenings and treatments, 8,000 HIV tests, and 400,000 birth control services. PPWI also performs pregnancy tests for patients and offers both prenatal counseling and referral services. PPWI works with community partners to ensure pregnant women who are eligible for BadgerCare get signed up for the program at their Planned Parenthood visit so there a continuum of care so critical in early pregnancy. One of PPWI's patients, Lindsay, explains:

“When I got pregnant with my first child, I was without insurance. I went to Planned Parenthood, where I received a free exam and pregnancy test. I received counseling that was accurate and unbiased. I kept my child, and Planned Parenthood helped me file for BadgerCare and find a great prenatal clinic. Because Planned Parenthood was there to help me, we had a happy, healthy pregnancy and birth.”

Comprehensive women's health centers, like Planned Parenthood and other women's health centers around the state, offer a full range of health services provided by licensed medical professionals. At 52 health centers statewide, women receive cervical and breast cancer screenings, STD testing and treatment, birth control services and prenatal care referrals. These women's health centers are what truly make the difference to healthy women and families in Wisconsin.

This legislature should focus on protecting these legitimate women's health care centers that provide the full range of reproductive health services through honest and accurate communication between a licensed medical professional and a patient. **The best way to do that is to vote NO on Walker's budget proposal, which guts Wisconsin's family planning program and leaves over 30,000 women without access to basic care.**