

# Revoking Local Control: Preempting Nondiscrimination Protections and Putting Pregnancy Resource Centers Above the Law

[HCS HB 174](#) - [Rep. Hubrecht](#) (R-151, Dexter)

House Bill 174 aims to preempt the City of St. Louis' new law protecting people from housing and employment discrimination based on their reproductive health decisions. Additionally, this bill would take away the rights of local governments to regulate so-called Pregnancy Resources Centers (PRCs).

## **The Missouri Legislature should not be removing local nondiscrimination protections.**

- HB 174 is clearly trying to undermine a new St. Louis ordinance that protects people from housing and employment discrimination based on their reproductive health decisions like using birth control, parenting, having an abortion, or using IVF.
- Missourians deserve to be protected from discrimination based on their reproductive health decisions – employers and landlords have no business imposing their moral or religious views on their employees and tenants. There is no reason a locality should be prohibited from enacting this type of protection when the state has failed to do so.

## **Opponents of safe, legal abortion have purposely mischaracterized the new St. Louis nondiscrimination protections.**

- The new St. Louis ordinance does not require anyone to provide or refer for abortion, nor does it require employers to provide employees with health insurance that covers abortion care.

## **This measure is poorly thought-out and will result in unintended consequences.**

- HB 174 prohibits cities from determining which health care benefits can be provided to public employees. This applies to coverage of any type of health care.
- The language of the bill is overly broad and could prevent a locality from enforcing state or federal law that touches any health care topics.

## **So-called pregnancy resource centers should not be above the law.**

- Pregnant people should have accurate information about all of their options. Information should support them, help them make their own decision, and enable them to take care of their health and well-being, not shame or coerce them.
- PRCs are on record providing false and misleading information to women, men and young people about pregnancy and sex. Though many falsely advertise themselves as health care facilities, PRCs are not licensed medical centers and they do not provide physical exams, sexually transmitted infection (STI) treatment, birth control counseling, or prenatal care coordination. PRCs are not required to provide medically factual or accurate information. These facilities are *not* regulated in the content of the “medical” advice or referrals they provide, and staff often use intimidation tactics to dissuade people from having an abortion.

- Under HB 174, PRCs would not have to adhere to existing ordinances with which other entities must comply. PRCs would not be required to comply with rules or ordinances established in the future, such as requirements regarding client confidentiality or false and misleading advertising

## **Just One Example of How Pregnancy Resource Centers Harm Women's Health and Should NOT Be Put Beyond the Reach of Regulation**

Sarah\* became my patient when she came to the emergency room with her mother, suffering from severe abdominal pain. She had a positive pregnancy test and was immediately evaluated by the gynecology team. An ultrasound quickly confirmed that she had an ectopic pregnancy that was bleeding into her abdomen. Given the emergent nature of her condition, we quickly brought her to surgery to remove the abnormal pregnancy and to stop the bleeding.

It wasn't until after the surgery that Sarah's mother told me about their visit to a PRC. They went to a center that offered free care and counseling for pregnant women after Sarah confided in her mother that she missed her period and a home pregnancy test was positive. Sarah and her mother discussed her pregnancy before the visit to the PRC and decided together that terminating the pregnancy, initiating contraception and returning to her life as a high-school student would be best for Sarah. However, they were ecstatic to find out at their visit that Sarah "wasn't" pregnant. Sarah's mother told me how the woman at the PRC performed an ultrasound and didn't see a pregnancy in Sarah's uterus. The woman told Sarah that she probably miscarried. Sarah and her mother inquired about birth control and were told that the "only acceptable option for a 16 year old is abstinence."

Sarah's mother told me that the center's response made her feel shame for asking about birth control for her daughter. However, she was overjoyed that Sarah would not have to make the decision to have an abortion. They left the center under the impression that the ordeal was over and that Sarah could return to being a teenager. Instead, Sarah's pregnancy continued to grow in her fallopian tube. Eventually, it ruptured and put her life at risk. Ultimately, Sarah underwent a surgery to remove the pregnancy and her fallopian tube. Had she received proper medical care earlier, the ectopic pregnancy would have been diagnosed and Sarah could have had a less invasive procedure, preserving her fallopian tube. Not only was Sarah unable to get appropriate medical care at the PRC but she received inaccurate information that negatively impacted her health and put her life at risk. The loss of her fallopian tube is a direct result of the inappropriate care and deceptive guidance given to Sarah by the PRC and will impact her ability to conceive a child in the future.

Excerpted from Testimony of Colleen McNicholas, DO, Leadership Training Academy Fellow, Physicians for Reproductive Health

*\*Please note that the patient's name has been changed to protect confidentiality.*