

# **Diverting Tax Dollars to Faith-Based Anti-Abortion Counseling Centers**

[HB 1288](#) - [Rep. Engler](#) (R-116, Farmington)

[SB 632](#) - [Sen. Dixon](#) (R-30, Springfield)

*House Bill 1288 and Senate Bill 632 extend the expiration date on tax credits that allow businesses and individuals to pay less in taxes when they donate to faith-based anti-abortion counseling centers.*

## **Faith-based anti-abortion counseling centers are on record providing false and misleading information.**

- Faith-based anti-abortion counseling centers 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, they are not licensed medical centers and they do not provide physical exams, sexually transmitted infection (STI) treatment, birth control counseling, or prenatal care coordination.

## **Pregnant people deserve accurate information about all of their options, but faith-based anti-abortion counseling centers are not required to provide it.**

- Faith-based anti-abortion counseling centers are not required to provide factually or medically 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.
- Any entity working with pregnant people should provide factual, medically accurate, and complete information about all legal 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, mislead, or coerce them.

## **By offering these tax credits, Missouri is diverting tax dollars that could go toward efforts to improve maternal and infant health outcomes across the state.**

- Several Missouri counties have very high infant and maternal mortality rates. Each dollar in tax credits is a dollar that cannot be spent toward improving outcomes for mothers and babies in Missouri.

## **Missouri should not incentivize organizations that withhold critical medical information and mislead pregnant people.**

## **Just One Example of How Faith-Based Anti-Abortion Counseling Centers Harm Women's Health and Should NOT Be Supported With Tax Dollars**

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 faith-based anti-abortion counseling center. 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 faith-based anti-abortion counseling center 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 center 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 faith-based anti-abortion counseling center, 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 faith-based anti-abortion counseling center 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.*