

LOUD LIGHT CIVIC ACTION

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Loud Light Civic Action
Written Opponent Testimony of HB 2809
For the House Federal and State Affairs Committee

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Chair Carpenter and members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Melissa Stiehler, and I serve as Advocacy Director of Loud Light Civic Action, a Kansas based, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that supports and builds the civic engagement and leadership of young people in our state. Because we believe that pregnant people deserve fact-based, comprehensive medical care and because we believe it is inappropriate to provide taxpayer funds to a political movement rejected by voters in recent history, Loud Light Civic Action strongly opposes HB 2809.

While the new “Every Mom Matters” program established in HB 2809 has some important differences than the “Alternatives to Abortion Program” established by the legislature recently, we have real concerns that the \$6,000,000+ in funding established in HB 2809 will be directed at the same type of “crisis pregnancy centers” receiving taxpayer funding through “Alternatives to Abortion” because of the similarity of these programs. Loud Light Civic Action has serious concerns with the honesty and effectiveness of crisis pregnancy centers and fundamentally believes it is not in the best interest of Kansas to provide taxpayer funding for them.

Concern: Misappropriating Taxpayer Money into the Anti-Abortion Movement

Programs like this are rarely, if ever, used for comprehensive medical care, but are instead a means of inappropriately funneling taxpayer money into the anti-abortion movement. This can be seen in the Alternatives to Abortion Program. In 2023, \$2,000,000 of taxpayer funds were awarded to the Kansas Pregnancy Care Network (KPCN). U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp is the President of their Board of Directors. He is also responsible for the PAC that sent misleading text messages to voters telling them that a “yes” vote for the August Constitutional Amendment would protect abortion access. Recipients of these funds have the responsibility to be honest with taxpayers about their intentions and their use, and have not proven to do so.

Concern: These Clinics Mislead Pregnant People

The Kansas Pregnancy Care Network supports fake clinics, who mislead potential patients with tricky wording on their services and provide misinformation about abortion. They do this by discussing abortion services using coded language like “your choice, our support”, when they do not offer comprehensive healthcare services, such as Vie Medical Clinic in Pittsburg and the Branches Pregnancy Center in El Dorado. KPCN funded organizations, such as the Choices Medical Clinic in Wichita and Lifecare Center in Ottawa, advertise abortion reversal pills which have not been proven to be either safe or effective since

medical researchers had to shut down clinical trials due to patient safety risks. Clinics, such as Embrace Clinic in Wichita, offer “pre-abortion assessments” yet do not clearly indicate that they don’t offer abortion services. All of these clinics and more currently receive Kansas taxpayer funding from the Alternatives to Abortion program, yet they are not honest with the pregnant people they aim to serve.

Concern: Not Providing Adequate Healthcare and Not Proven to Reduce Abortion Rates

It is not clear that a single KPCN medical clinic actually has a fully qualified medical staff person to care for all aspects of pregnancy, such as an OB/GYN, despite many advertising themselves as medical clinics. They are not subject to the same inspection, safety, and regulatory requirements as medical facilities, nor are they required to provide medically accurate information. This is not an acceptable form of healthcare. Funding clinics like this does not lead to better patient care, safer pregnancies, or improved health outcomes. There is no verifiable evidence that these clinics reduce abortion, unlike the multitude of studies that have proven that unplanned pregnancies and abortion rates decrease with access to contraception, and accurate comprehensive sex education.

Concern: Kansas Voters Rejected Anti-Abortion Laws, Continue to Call for Healthcare Access

Sixty percent of Kansas Voters rejected the legislature's attempt to restrict abortion access in Kansas during the August 2nd Constitutional Amendment Election. According to the most recent Kansas Speaks survey, two thirds of Kansans do not support the legislature interfering with a pregnant person’s healthcare decisions about abortion. Appropriating funding for anti-abortion clinics is a direct affront to the will of the people. Alternatively, seventy percent of Kansas voters support increasing comprehensive healthcare access by expanding Medicaid. Medicaid expansion would allow many of the targeted demographic groups to access contraception, which is a proven method for reducing the number of abortions, and would help protect rural medical centers from closing, which is a proven method for increasing maternal healthcare access.

Concern: Unequal Treatment and Undue Influence in a Patients Choice of Medical Provider

Even if none of this funding went to CPCs, Loud Light Civic Action would still oppose HB 2809 due to its preferential treatment to anti-abortion providers. This bill excludes qualified medical and family planning providers that even discuss, let alone provide abortion care as a medical option and their patients from accessing this program. Medical Providers, such as Trust Women and Planned Parenthood, offer quality healthcare services that Kansans should be able to access if they so choose. I personally have been a patient of Planned Parenthood for my OB/GYN needs for over a decade. When I had recurring kidney infections that multiple other healthcare professionals were unable to diagnose, Planned Parenthood successfully diagnosed and treated the issue upon my first visit. When my best friend had a high risk pregnancy, she was able to access the care she needed to protect her and her child through a Planned Parenthood referral to the right kind of specialist. Patients of these healthcare providers trust their doctors, and it is not the business of the government of Kansas to pick their doctors for them.

For these reasons, Loud Light Civic Action strongly urges members of this committee to oppose HB 2809, and urges the legislature to require crisis pregnancy clinics to pass the same regulatory and ethical standards as other medical centers. The current and proposed additional funding of clinics that provide medical misinformation and inaccuracies is a disservice to your constituents. Thank you all for your time and I hope you take my testimony into consideration.