

Testimony of Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson
Regarding: Int 0506-2022
NYC Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection
June 21, 2022

Good morning. For too long, access to abortion and other reproductive health services has been under attack across our country. And now that the Supreme Court is poised to rule on the future of Roe v. Wade, it is critical that New York City act to ensure that every woman has the right to make decisions about her own body without interference, coercion, or manipulation. That is why I am proud to introduce this legislation alongside Council Member Carlina Rivera to require reporting on “pregnancy services centers.” Thank you to Chairperson Velazquez and this Committee for holding a hearing on this bill today.

Pregnancy services centers are facilities which provide services to pregnant women while having the appearance of a licensed medical facility but do not actually have a license to provide medical or pharmaceutical services. In the past, some of these facilities obscured which services they offered, appearing to be clinics that offered a full range of reproductive healthcare options, while not actually providing access to services such as abortion referrals or emergency contraception.

In 2010, the Council enacted legislation to more thoroughly regulate pregnancy services centers in what became Local Law 17 of 2011. This bill required these centers to state up front to their clients whether they were licensed medical practitioners and whether they provided referrals for abortions or emergency contraception. This legislation was necessary to prevent these centers from misinforming women seeking reproductive care about the services they offer. Women should be able to decide for themselves the best options when it comes to their bodies, without manipulation and deception from these organizations.

The bill under consideration today will expand on this legislation by requiring the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection to issue regular reports on the operation of pregnancy services centers across New York City, including information identifying each center, the services they offer and associated prices, whether the centers enroll women in benefit programs, how they advertise their services, and whether they take public funding. Additionally, the bill will require DCWP to engage in a public awareness campaign to educate the public about pregnancy service centers, the services they offer, and how to access reproductive health care, including abortion.

Women in The Bronx and across our city deserve access to the care that works best for them, and they should be able to access it in clinics that are fully transparent about the services they offer. Women have the right to control what happens to their bodies, whether that means carrying a pregnancy to term or seeking an abortion. This bill will enable the city government and city residents to get a fuller picture of what pregnancy services centers are operating in New York City to ensure that no woman is denied the services that she is entitled to.

With reproductive rights under attack across the country, I am grateful that leaders at the federal, state, and local levels are taking action to protect our rights. Thank you for considering this legislation today, and I hope that you will vote to enact it into law.