



TERRA LAWSON-REMER
SUPERVISOR, THIRD DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: November 7, 2023

30

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ADVANCING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS EDUCATION AND PURSUING LITIGATION TO SHUT DOWN FAKE AND FRAUDULENT CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

In September 2023, legal action was initiated by California State Attorney General Rob Bonta against two California “Crisis Pregnancy Centers.” These centers, notorious for their unethical practices, were accused of using deceptive methods to dissuade women from pursuing abortion. The blatant misinformation, presented as “medical advice,” is just one of the tactics deployed by these so-called medical providers.

According to news reports, San Diego County has as many as 16 “Crisis Pregnancy Centers” that unknowing residents could be using to their detriment. These centers misleadingly offer free consultations for services, but then present individuals with anti-abortion information and actively try to stop individuals from terminating their pregnancy. San Diego County residents are at risk of being harmed emotionally and physically by “Crisis Pregnancy Centers.” We must ensure our residents are properly informed about the dangers of these fake reproductive health centers.

Today’s action requests the Board of Supervisors (Board) take action to amplify important programs launched by the state of California in the wake of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, and direct the County Chief Administrative Officer to develop a public education campaign plan to make communities aware of deceptive “Crisis Pregnancy Centers,” and share information about vital reproductive health services from reputable and qualified providers such as Planned Parenthood by making the information available to the public through California Senate Bill (SB) 245 and Medi-Cal.

This action will be another step in ensuring that there continues to be broad public access to vital reproductive healthcare services, and that an individual’s right to choose is not jeopardized.

**SUBJECT: ADVANCING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS EDUCATION AND
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RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR TERRA LAWSON-REMER

1. Direct the County Counsel, in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer, to bring back recommendations to the Board regarding options for initiation of litigation against, including but not limited to shutting down such centers, whether in Closed or Open Session, as appropriate.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to create and implement a public education campaign plan that potentially include billboards and social media ads, to (a) increase local awareness around “Crisis Pregnancy Centers,” and (b) educate the public about resources available under California Senate Bill (SB) 245, as well as reproductive services for Medi-Cal recipients.
3. Authorize the Agency Director for Health and Human Services to apply for additional funding opportunities, if available, to fund efforts to increase awareness around reproductive health services.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

When safe and legal access to abortion and reproductive care is limited, restricted, or jeopardized— people of color, immigrants, young individuals, and people with low incomes are often the first to be impacted. It is imperative that the County of San Diego be at the forefront in defending and protecting the right to abortion and reproductive care and increase public awareness about what services are available within our local communities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The plan will seek to use environmentally sustainable forms of advertising and outreach, such as digital communications and billboards, rather than mass mailings or leaflets.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Plan for the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in estimated one-time costs of \$500,000. HHSA will use existing appropriations to fund costs. The funding source is existing one-time General Purpose Revenue. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

In the wake of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned, California Governor Gavin Newsom immediately took action to protect both patients and health providers within California and proposed a reproductive healthcare package to expand access to these services for both residents and those

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PURSUING LITIGATION TO SHUT DOWN FAKE AND
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seeking these resources from outside the state. The Governor also launched a billboard campaign in several anti-abortion states, to educate people about what services were available in California.

In March 2022, Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 245 into law, which expands access to reproductive health care by eliminating out-of-pocket costs for abortion services covered by health plans. SB 245 prohibits health plans and insurers from imposing a co-pay, deductible, or other cost-sharing requirement for abortion and abortion-related services. The legislation also prohibits health plans and insurers from imposing utilization management practices on covered abortion and abortion-related services. In addition, all public universities student health centers must provide medical abortion services through on-site staff, telehealth services, or contracted providers. California is also one of six states that require health insurance plans to cover abortion services.

While robust action has been taken to ensure reproductive health care access, San Diego communities are still greatly impacted by “Crisis Pregnancy Centers” which mimic reproductive healthcare clinics offering abortion services. These centers misleadingly offer free consultations for services, but then present individuals with anti-abortion information and actively try to stop individuals from terminating their pregnancy. They actively interfere with a person’s agency and decisions about whether to start a family and can also have detrimental and long-term health and emotional impacts.

This Board Letter requests the Board of Supervisors take action to amplify important programs launched by the state of California in the wake of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, and direct the County Chief Administrative Officer to develop a public education campaign plan to make communities aware of deceptive “Crisis Pregnancy Centers,” and share information about vital reproductive health services from reputable and qualified providers such as Planned Parenthood by making the information available to the public through SB 245 and Medi-Cal.

California and the County have been at the forefront of ensuring continued access to abortion and contraception, as well as the protection of reproductive healthcare rights. However, more must be done. This action will be another step in ensuring that there continues to be broad public access to vital services, and that an individual’s right to choose is not jeopardized.

In May 2022, Chairwoman Nora Vargas and Vice Chair Terra Lawson-Remer also put forward a resolution at the County which supported enshrining a pregnant person’s right to choose within the California constitution. This resolution foregrounded the importance of an individual’s right to privacy to choose to have an abortion as well as the health impacts and risks of pregnant persons, particularly for individuals living in poverty and people of color who are three times as likely to die in childbirth than white individuals. It committed the County of San Diego to defending and fighting for the right to choose for all who seek care.

In June of 2022, California Attorney General Rob Bonta announced a statewide consumer alert to increase public awareness around “Crisis Pregnancy Centers” that deceptively mimic reproductive healthcare clinics offering abortion services, several of which operate in San Diego

**SUBJECT: ADVANCING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS EDUCATION AND
PURSUING LITIGATION TO SHUT DOWN FAKE AND
FRAUDULENT CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS**

County. In September 2023, legal action was initiated by California State Attorney General Rob Bonta against two Northern California “Crisis Pregnancy Centers.”

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

This Board Letter aligns with the County of San Diego’s Healthy Equity focus of its Strategic Plan, which states the County intends to "reduce disparities and disproportionality and ensure access for all through a fully optimized health and social service delivery system and upstream strategies” and “focus on policy, systems and environmental approaches that ensure equal opportunity for health and well-being through partnerships and innovation.”

Respectfully submitted,



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