

House Bill Responds to Gosnell Horror by Attacking Pro-Life Speech

An Alliance Defending Freedom opinion letter sent to a House committee Wednesday outlines serious constitutional problems with a proposed bill that would require the Federal Trade Commission to regulate the speech of **pro-life** pregnancy resource centers.

“Pregnancy resource centers, which offer real help and hope to women, shouldn’t be punished by political allies of abortion sellers,” argues senior counsel Casey Mattox. “These centers serve women free of charge without burdening the taxpayers. They deserve Congress’ praise, not its condemnation, especially in the wake of the recent **Gosnell** atrocities in Pennsylvania.”

The proposed bill, HR 2030, requires the Federal Trade Commission to create and enforce rules that would regulate the speech of local nonprofit pro-life pregnancy resource centers.

The broad language of the bill redefines a “nonprofit” as a for-profit business: “The Federal Trade Commission shall enforce this Act with respect to an organization that is not organized to carry on business for its own profit or that of its members as if such organization were a person over which the Commission has authority.”

Mattox notes: “‘As if’ is the revealing phrase. The bill itself acknowledges that the commission has no authority to regulate the **free speech** of local nonprofits. But the lawmakers who sponsored this bill want to order the commission to do so anyway in their brazen attempt to harm the efforts of pro-life charitable organizations.”

Similar laws enacted in some local governments around the country force pro-life centers to post and provide messages that discourage women from using the free services the centers provide. None of the laws regulate the speech of abortion sellers. Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys have filed several lawsuits against these laws (Montgomery County, Md.; Baltimore, Md.; New York City; and Austin, Texas), and every court decision has found the laws to violate the **First Amendment**.

“Pregnancy resource centers provide compassionate support and real choice for the mother, her family and the community. They should be free to share their message,” Mattox adds. “The real worry of the abortion lobby and some in Congress is that pregnancy centers will serve people for free and give them lasting help, cutting into the bottom line of big abortion sellers like **Planned Parenthood**.”

The letter explains that pregnancy resource centers “do not charge women for the information or their assistance. Nevertheless, they save taxpayers significant funds by providing important free services to pregnant women and to the community, including personal support, opinions about pregnancy options, self-administered pregnancy tests, and practical resources like baby clothes, diapers, and other necessities for women who have chosen to carry their pregnancies to term. They also provide emotional and spiritual assistance to post-abortive women. ... Pregnancy resource centers deserve the House’s appreciation, not regulation.”