

NYC Sued Over Pregnancy Care Centers Law

✖ Planned Parenthood remains in the crosshairs of pro-life advocates, but there's a new twist in the battle for life—and the Empire State is the battleground. Pro-life pregnancy centers are under legal attack in New York City.

A new law threatens non-medical, pro-life centers with hefty fines and the risk of shut down if they don't post signs and publish the New York State Department of Health's view in their ads. The signs must be bilingual and posted in multiple places. The viewpoint that must be included: The health department encourages women to go somewhere else.

"To ensure that women are fully informed of the services provided by pregnancy service centers, this bill requires the centers to inform their clients whether they have a licensed medical provider on staff and disclose whether they provide certain pregnancy-related services or not," said Mayor Bloomberg at a public hearing on local laws last week. "This bill also requires centers to provide confidentiality protections for their clients' personal and health information."

Failure to post the signs can result in fines of up to \$1,000 for the first day of violation and up to \$2,500 for each day thereafter. After three days of violation within a two-year period, the commissioner can shut down the center with the assistance of police. Other parts of the law allow for additional fines and even imprisonment.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) has filed suit against New York City, representing pregnancy care centers in the most recent ruling. None of the laws affect abortionists, such as Planned Parenthood. In other

words, abortion centers don't have to publish any disclaimers from the health departments in their ads. Two federal courts have issued injunctions against similar bills in Maryland.

"Pregnancy centers, which offer real help and hope to women, shouldn't be punished by political allies of the abortion industry," says ADF Legal Counsel Matt Bowman. "Attacks on pregnancy centers are an ideologically motivated attempt to distract from the growing national scandals in the abortion industry. For years, abortionists have preyed on women and girls for profit. Now pro-abortion politicians are trying to give women fewer choices."

The New York City law defines a "pregnancy services center" as any facility with a primary purpose of serving women who are or may be pregnant and offers ultrasounds or medical exams, or "has the appearance of a licensed medical facility." According to the ADF, the law's "appearance" definition is broad enough to cover homes that serve homeless, abused, and abandoned women but don't function as pregnancy centers.

ADF is representing two centers and a maternity home in the lawsuit, Pregnancy Care Center of New York v. City of New York, filed with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. M. Todd Parker of Moskowitz & Book, LLP, is local counsel.

"At a time when New Yorkers believe the city's abortion ratio to be too high, it's absurd to see the city work with pro-abortion groups to ensure that the public is 'protected' from the 'threat' of these compassionate, caring, nonprofit groups that exist specifically because they oppose harm to women and their babies," says Bowman. "The same cannot be said for Planned Parenthood."