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**Testimony of the New York Civil Liberties Union**

**before**

**The New York City Council**

**Committee on Women's Issues**

**regarding**

**Limited Service Pregnancy Center Act (Int. No. 371)**

**November 16, 2010**

My name is Jennifer Carnig and I'm the director of communications for the New York Civil Liberties Union ("NYCLU").

On October 18<sup>th</sup> at 23 weeks pregnant I went to EMC Pregnancy Center in downtown Brooklyn. Though this crisis pregnancy center did not appear to have any licensed medical personnel on staff, it looked and felt like a doctor's office. I was given paperwork to fill out that asked for my medical history and a woman in scrubs was seeing patients in an exam room that looked like every OBGYN office I've ever been in.

I took a pregnancy test and sat waiting for the results with scared 16, 17 and 18 year old women – women half my age who had come seeking help at a desperate moment. Though I knew I was pregnant and had been registering "positive" on pregnancy tests since I was four weeks along, I was told that my pregnancy test was "inconclusive." The only way to know for sure was a sonogram.

I was taken into the examination room where the woman in scrubs pulled a wand over my belly and played the sound of the heartbeat for me. She ooh'ed and ahh'ed and with a few more quick swipes said she "gave the baby a full examination." She pronounced my baby "healthy and perfect." The whole procedure took less than five minutes. I was never seen by a doctor or nurse, and my fetus had not received a full medical examination, though if I didn't know beforehand, I would have assumed – as many women do – that I'd had a full checkup.

EMC's employees were clear with me from the start that I wouldn't get help or information about an abortion at their center, but they did give me pamphlets containing medical misinformation about the effects of abortion. Though these pamphlets were scary and full of untruths, the First Amendment clearly protects all political speech, including the inaccuracies EMC's employees spread.

But when I left EMC that day I felt it was a place that wants people to think it is providing medical services. While crisis pregnancy center employees must have a right to speak, they shouldn't be able to spread misinformation while masquerading as medical professionals. New York's women must have all of the facts when it comes to their health. For the sake of the countless young women who go to crisis pregnancy centers at their most desperate moments, it is vital that these centers are completely upfront that they are not medical facilities.

Thank you very much.