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**Pregnancy resource centers help women, don't torture**

- By Kathleen Parker

No matter how you cut it, trying to shut down pregnancy resource centers is not a good look. Yet government officials in some Democratic-leaning states are targeting such centers, claiming they lure pregnant women who think they're entering an abortion clinic and then, presumably, talk them into keeping their babies. What fresh hell is this?

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said in 2022 that pro-baby centers shouldn't be allowed to "torture a pregnant person" and introduced legislation to "crack down" on them. New York Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani said he would protect the city against "false or deceptive" information from pregnancy resource centers.

And New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin, a Democrat, issued a subpoena against First Choice Women's Resource Centers Inc., demanding 10 years of confidential internal records, including donor, volunteer and staff information, without cause or evidence of wrongdoing. Indeed, such centers have been offering life-affirming support to expectant mothers and families for decades.

First Choice shot back with a legal challenge argued last week before the U.S. Supreme Court. Plaintiffs' lawyers said the centers should be able to defend their constitutional rights in federal court when state officials target them because of their beliefs. Though the case was procedural, the ruling could have wide-ranging implications for nonprofits facing government intimidation, as the American Civil Liberties Union argued in an amicus brief.

Cutting through the pettifoggery, it seems that the New Jersey attorney general wants to thwart donor support through exposure and implied threats of contempt.

Wherever one stands on the reversal of Roe v. Wade, one can't possibly think it's wrong to help women who want to carry their babies to term but lack support and resources. If it's the faith-based motivation of providers that rankles, then you might want to brush up on religious liberty and the Constitution.

Some argue the centers are legal but unethical. In the American Medical Association's Journal of Ethics, two doctors write: "Although crisis pregnancy centers enjoy First Amendment rights protections, their propagation of misinformation should be regarded as an ethical violation that undermines women's health."

While these legal maneuvers have kept lawyers, doctors, nurses and laymen busy defending their mission to help women and babies, the war on the country's roughly 2,600

pregnancy centers has become violent. According to a tally by the Family Research Council, more than 100 of these centers, pro-life organizations and churches were attacked with arson, firebombing and vandalism after the May 2022 leak of the ruling that reversed Roe v. Wade.

Whatever compels people to donate time or money to help the less fortunate when they're most vulnerable should be reason for celebration, not punishment. If a pregnant woman seeking an abortion wanders into a pro-life clinic, it isn't as though she'll be tackled, shackled into a birthing chair and forced to recite the Nicene Creed. She can leave. Instead, such "misguided" women more often find helpful staff members, in many cases a nurse, doctor, radiologist or sonographer whose mission isn't to misinform but to help women in distress make informed decisions.

Most of the centers offer long- and short-term support to mother and child and, in some cases, the father. A lot of these young women are unmarried and say they'd have their babies if they had family or other support. Many pregnancy resource centers offer just that — diapers, formula, baby clothes, strollers, cribs and referrals to other services. Some provide job training and housing.

So, what's the beef? The answer should be obvious. If the government will no longer support Planned Parenthood through reimbursements — more than \$1 billion in payments from 2019 to 2022 across the organization's affiliates from Medicare, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program — then pregnancy centers, which are nonprofit and largely but not solely subsidized by private donors, shouldn't be allowed to exist.

Critics see the centers as the next frontier in the war on abortion, a conservative Christian movement to replace abortion clinics. This seems less a hostile takeover than filling a void that's not been addressed.

If feminism has taught us anything, it is that women have agency. It seems preposterous that someone as smart as the senator from Massachusetts would assume that a pregnant woman can't read signs or make phone calls to figure out where she wants to go. Who these days says that women can't think for themselves? Only the purveyors of choice, it seems.

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