

Options for Her and the NJ Consortium of Pregnancy Centers to Rep. Gottheimer: Inaccurate Statements Harm Women

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CHERRY HILL, NEW JERSEY, UNITED STATES, May 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Options for Her, located in Cherry Hill, NJ, and two other locations in Ocean City and Trenton, along with the New Jersey Consortium of Pregnancy Centers, an organization representing pregnancy centers from throughout the state, are outraged by the inflammatory, false comments made against them by Rep. Josh Gottheimer (NJ-5) in a press conference on Monday outside Options for Her's Cherry Hill location.

"In his efforts to 'shut down' pregnancy centers and remove free help to women in need, Rep. Gottheimer showed up unannounced in front of one of our member centers and mischaracterized all New Jersey pregnancy resource centers," explained Eileen S. Den Bleyker, Esq., an attorney representing the Consortium. "He called the centers 'brainwashing cult clinics' and made other false and defamatory statements. In doing so, Congressman Gottheimer demonstrated that he is seriously ill-informed and fails to fairly represent all his constituents – which include the clients, staff, volunteers, and financial supporters of Options for Her."

"We are incredibly disheartened and disappointed," said Deborah Biskey, Chief Executive Officer of Options for Her. "I would have been more than willing to meet with Congressman Gottheimer to enlighten him on the wide array of support and services we offer for women, men, and families in our communities, had he taken the time to contact me or even attempted to speak with me when he visited. To my knowledge, he has not visited any of our three office locations to familiarize himself with the professional services, material resources, or educational programs and support that we offer to women facing unplanned pregnancies, as well as those we meet battling addiction, victims of domestic violence, and those looking to get out of being trafficked. Since 1985, we have supported over 10,000 women and men. We have been met with endless positive reviews and continued relationships with our clients and their families."

"I still gladly welcome the opportunity to meet with him and answer any questions he may have regarding Options for Her and the essential work of all pregnancy resource centers," added Biskey. "For over nearly four decades, pregnancy resource centers like Options for Her and the others in the NJ Consortium, have been providing no-cost, confidential services to confirm

pregnancy, along with ongoing support to assist parents in planning for their future. Rep. Gottheimer's statements ignored this record of service to the thousands of women and their loved ones who have benefitted from it."

"It is irresponsible and reckless to attack New Jersey's pregnancy centers and make threats against them using the verbiage he did. And it could very well put the women we serve at risk of attack," said Rita Reyes, a spokesperson for the Consortium. "These slanderous comments by Rep. Gottheimer are not only inflammatory and deceitful, but they serve only to divide an already polarized community."

The press conference referenced a Consumer Alert against pregnancy centers issued by the NJ Attorney General last year. At that time, Den Bleyker reached out to the Attorney General on behalf of the Consortium in an effort to correct misinformation, but State officials refused a dialogue. The Consortium then requested records from the Attorney General under OPRA, which was also denied, causing the Consortium to file a lawsuit to obtain information on what prompted the Alert. The State revealed it had received no complaints against pregnancy centers, but refused to release other requested documents. In July 2023, a judge found that the State had wrongfully denied access to public records and ordered the Attorney General to respond and produce records. "These State officials and Rep. Gottheimer are unfairly attacking local nonprofit charitable organizations – who primarily help our state's women and families in their time of need – in a politically-charged over-reaction to the Supreme Court's decision in Dobbs," stated DenBleyker. "That decision merely returned decision-making over whether or not there should be restrictions on abortion to the citizens of each state and their elected representatives."

"New Jersey has no restrictions on abortion," added DenBleyker. "The charitable work of pregnancy centers in New Jersey improves the quality of women's choice over whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term, which is often swayed more by social factors, rather than medical necessity. Calls to shut down centers because they support a choice for life and are supported by Christians is blatantly discriminatory and our Centers will not allow such biased misrepresentations to be left unaddressed."

"Misrepresenting the work of pregnancy resource centers will actually be hurting women and families," said Biskey. "Rep. Gottheimer is casting an untruthful and negative light while making false claims about the very places that give women complete information to feel confident in making sound and informed choices regarding their pregnancies. Pregnancy resource centers like Options for Her work to ensure every client served feels educated and equipped in the decisions they make for themselves. We provide 100% free pregnancy services - including pregnancy testing and ultrasound, material resources, counseling, and programs and classes to educate and support new moms. Providing compassionate care and ongoing support to women, men, and families is at the core of all we do, and attacking our centers is not benefiting anyone."

"Rep. Gottheimer stated that 'we need to end extremism and preserve choices for women,'"

added Provencher. "Our thousands of North Jersey supporters, and hundreds of volunteers and staff – which include medical professionals – give generously and serve tirelessly so that women have the support needed to make positive, life-enhancing choices for themselves and their families."

The NJ Consortium of Pregnancy Centers is a group of life-affirming, non-profit organizations providing women facing unexpected pregnancies with free consultations, medical confirmation of pregnancy and parenting preparation with material aid. Pregnancy centers in New Jersey provide free services and ongoing support valued at more than \$3 million to more than 35,000 women, men, youth, and families every year. This includes almost \$2 million in free medical services provided by licensed and credentialed medical professionals.

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