
Breaking: New York City Council passes pregnancy center gag law

by Kathleen Gilbert

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NEW YORK, March 2, 2011 (LifeSiteNews.com) - A bill designed to gag pro-life pregnancy resource centers passed the New York City Council Wednesday afternoon in a 39-9-1 vote.

Int. No. 371, which would force pregnancy centers to prominently state whether they provide abortions, is expected to meet a court challenge by representatives of the state's 24 pro-life centers.

NARAL Pro-Choice New York hailed the news as a sign of the council members' "commitment to choice." "As anti-choice lawmakers across the country turn back the clock on reproductive health, it is encouraging to know that our elected officials in New York City are not only standing up for our rights, but moving the ball forward," said NARAL New York political director Sabrina Shulman to supporters.

Int. No. 371 forces pregnancy centers to post and orally state a disclaimer regarding the services they do not offer, namely abortion and contraception, and stating whether or not a medical provider is on site. The bill also opens up the center to costly lawsuits by providing a private right of action by aggrieved persons. The bill, notes Care Net, is part of a nationwide campaign by abortion industry advocates to publicly attack and ultimately shut down entities like pregnancy centers that support abortion alternatives.

Melinda Delahoyde, president of Care Net, a national network of pregnancy resource centers, said the council's move to hamstringing the pro-life centers would mean the city's astronomical abortion rate "could skyrocket even further." According to recent CDC reports, 41 percent of pregnancies in New York City end in abortion.

A similar city ordinance in Baltimore that was approved in November 2009 was struck down in January 2011 by a federal judge, who ruled the selective controlling of speech a violation of the centers' First Amendment rights.

Care Net's General Counsel Jeanneane Maxon said the New York bill is "another blatant example of unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination which should be subject to a court challenge."

The New York council, which is populated largely by liberal members, also passed a number of pro-abortion resolutions criticizing the U.S. House of Representatives for several of its pro-life initiatives, according to NARAL.