

No. 24-781

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IN THE  
**Supreme Court of the United States**

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FIRST CHOICE WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTERS, INC.,  
*Petitioner,*

*v.*

MATTHEW PLATKIN, IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY,  
*Respondent.*

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ON A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE THIRD CIRCUIT

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**BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* HAND OF HOPE  
PREGNANCY CENTER IN SUPPORT OF  
PETITIONER**

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**INTEREST OF *AMICUS CURIAE*<sup>1</sup>**

Hand of Hope Pregnancy Resource Center is an IRC § 501(c)(3) non-profit, Christian organization whose mission is to assist women and men facing unplanned pregnancies emotionally, spiritually, and physically by offering real choices through life-affirming pregnancy help centers. Hand of Hope operates centers in Fuquay Varina, Raleigh, and Fayetteville, North Carolina, and since its founding in 2004, has provided free pregnancy testing and ultrasounds to thousands of clients, along with counseling, life skills classes, and post-abortion support—serving over 14,000 client contacts annually in recent years and facilitating one baby born every two days.

Hand of Hope is well positioned to provide relevant factual background and legal argument on a key issue in this case. Hand of Hope has a direct interest in this case because it has been similarly targeted by state politicians in North Carolina as Plaintiff First Choice has in New Jersey. Like the subpoena and fraud investigation initiated by New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin against First Choice Women's Resource Centers for allegedly misleading practices and demands for donor information, Hand of Hope and other North Carolina pregnancy centers have faced scrutiny from state officials, including Governor Josh Stein (formerly Attorney General), who has publicly

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to this Court's Rule 37.6, counsel for *amicus curiae* certifies that this brief was not authored in whole or in part by counsel for any party and that no person or entity other than *amicus curiae* or its counsel has made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief.



criticized such centers for providing potentially false information and issued an executive order in January 2025 directing state agencies to educate the public on distinctions between licensed medical providers and crisis pregnancy centers to address perceived misinformation. Furthermore, Democratic state legislators in North Carolina have introduced bills to eliminate taxpayer funding for anti-abortion pregnancy centers, characterizing them as deceptive and harmful, mirroring broader political efforts to restrict their operations.

All services provided by Hand of Hope comply with applicable legal and regulatory requirements. Medical services, when offered, are provided in accordance with medical standards, under the supervision and direction of a licensed physician (or advanced clinical provider as permitted by law).

### **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT**

This Court must decide whether a challenge to a state investigatory demand becomes ripe when, as in the Ninth Circuit and the D.C. Circuits, a political regime's investigatory target has suffered an objectively reasonable chill of its First Amendment rights.

Pregnancy resource centers like Hand of Hope offer pregnant women critical resources. Hand of Hope believes that no woman should feel so alone or hopeless that she turns to abortion in the mistaken belief that it is her only choice. Hand of Hope seeks to empower pregnant women with such support and resources that they can thrive while also giving life to their unborn children. Indeed, Hand of Hope's vision

is a world where every new life is welcomed and children are nurtured within strong families, according to God's Plan, so that abortion is unthinkable. Hand of Hope's entire ministry is built on the ability to speak to pregnant women in need. Actions like those of the New Jersey Attorney General chill the speech and actions of *Amicus* and its donors, and they threaten the ability to carry out that important ministry.

Upholding these actions would continue weaponizing state laws against disfavored parties, a trend of attacks from both governmental and private actors. Following this Court's opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org.*, 597 U.S. 215 (2022), pro-abortion extremists have targeted pregnancy resource centers with threats and acts of violence. And politicians across the country are introducing laws that "harass caring people that simply want to help women make a different choice than abortion." Jor-El Godsey, *By Accusing Pregnancy Centers Of False Advertising, Pro-Abortion Politicians Prove They Can't Handle The Truth*, *The Federalist* (Feb. 20, 2023), [bit.ly/3KS4161](https://bit.ly/3KS4161). If this Court allows states to use their power against a disfavored entity due to religious or political animosity, states will continue to weaponize those laws against pregnancy resource centers.

The Court should reverse the decision below.

## ARGUMENT

### **I. Pregnancy resource centers have increasingly been the target of acts of violence, unwarranted scrutiny, and onerous regulations.**

Hand of Hope, Petitioners First Choice, and other pregnancy centers play a vital role in the lives of millions of women and children every year. The mission of each pregnancy center is to ensure that every woman feels loved and supported during her pregnancy. And they work to ensure that pregnant mothers are equipped with support, resources, and education.

Following this Court’s opinion in *Dobbs*, pregnancy resource centers have increasingly been the target of acts of violence, unwarranted scrutiny, and onerous regulations.

#### **A. Pregnancy resource centers face increasing political attacks and unwarranted scrutiny from lawmakers.**

Attacks on pregnancy centers mark a growing desire to enact new laws and weaponize existing laws to burden them, including by employing privacy laws, deceptive trade practices and truth-in-advertising laws, and licensing and inspection requirements. Although the legal framework may vary, the goal is consistent: use onerous regulation to drive pregnancy resource centers out of existence.

Start with congressional efforts to silence resource centers. A United States senator called for Congress to “move more aggressively” in regulating pregnancy

resource centers. Alison Kuznitz, *U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren Wants to Crack Down on 'Deceptive' Crisis Pregnancy Centers in Massachusetts, Across the Country*, MassLive, (Jun. 29, 2022) [bit.ly/3oCyQ7f](https://bit.ly/3oCyQ7f). The same senator then accused life-affirming pregnancy resource centers of “torturing” pregnant women and called on the federal government to “shut them down all around the country.” Jessica Chasmar, *Google to Crack Down on Search Results for Crisis Pregnancy Centers After Dem Pressure*, Fox Business, (Aug. 25, 2022), [bit.ly/40niaPn](https://bit.ly/40niaPn). Nearly two dozen members of Congress even pressured Google to “crack down on search results for crisis pregnancy centers.” *Id.* (emphasis added). And last year, Representatives Jamie Raskin and Maxwell Frost sent a letter to the Government Accountability Office, calling on them to investigate Hand of Hope and other crisis pregnancy centers’ funding. Nathaniel Weixel, *House Democrats Call for Investigation into Crisis Pregnancy Center Funding*, The Hill (July 11, 2024), [bit.ly/3AS4nsC](https://bit.ly/3AS4nsC).

Politicians have resorted to using privacy concerns as a pretext for targeting pregnancy centers too. For example, a group of pro-abortion United States senators baselessly accused Heartbeat International of failing to maintain secure data for the women who seek out the network’s services and resources. *See Letter from Seven United States Senators to Heartbeat Int’l* (Sep. 19, 2022) (on file with counsel). As Heartbeat responded through its counsel, that letter appeared simply “to be an unwarranted effort to investigate a private organization which holds to a religious and ideological opinion with which [those federal officials] disagree.” Letter from Heartbeat Int’l to Sen.

Elizabeth Warren, et al. (Oct. 1, 2022) (on file with counsel). Indeed, political hostility towards pregnancy resource centers and groundless accusations against their operators are at an all-time high.

Federal lawmakers have also targeted pregnancy centers with “deceptive practices” legislation. In June 2022, after accusing (without evidence) pregnancy centers of using “deceptive or misleading advertisements about abortion services,” a group of congressmen introduced the “Stop Anti-Abortion Disinformation Act” (SAD Act), which would weaponize the Federal Trade Commission to crack down on entities that discuss pregnancy from a life-affirming viewpoint. *See* Nick Popli & Vera Bergengruen, *Lawmakers Scramble to Reform Digital Privacy After Roe Reversal*, Time (Jul. 1, 2022), [bit.ly/3L0HFR1](https://bit.ly/3L0HFR1). Several senators reintroduced the bill in February of this year. Press Release: Warren, Bonamici Renew Fight Against Misinformation in Pregnancy Care (Feb. 13, 2025), [perma.cc/JE4H-2GYB](https://perma.cc/JE4H-2GYB).

There have been similar efforts at the state level. State attorneys general like the one here have threatened and leveraged enforcement actions against facilities that hold life-affirming views. In June 2022, for example, California Attorney General Rob Bonta issued a consumer alert targeting pregnancy centers, calling them “fake clinics” and accusing them of employing “deceptive” tactics to get women to choose life. Paul Sisson, *In San Diego, Attorney General Puts Anti-Abortion Clinics on Notice*, San Diego Union-Tribune, (Jun. 1, 2022), [bit.ly/3KYFRIs](https://bit.ly/3KYFRIs). That same month, Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Hea-

ley issued a similar consumer advisory warning. David L. Ryan, *Maura Healey Issues Warning About ‘Crisis Pregnancy Centers’ in Mass.*, Boston.com (Jul. 6, 2022), [bit.ly/3L3pH0A](https://bit.ly/3L3pH0A). Healey accused pregnancy centers of offering “misleading information” about their services and falsely claimed that they are not required to keep medical information private or to follow professional medical ethics. *Id.* She encouraged women to file complaints against pregnancy centers. *Id.* As governor, Healey later launched a \$1 million media campaign targeting crisis pregnancy centers across social media, radio, billboards and public transit. Press Release: *Healey-Driscoll Administration Launches First-in-the-Nation Public Education Campaign on the Dangers of Anti-Abortion Centers*, Mass. Exec. Off. of Health & Human Servs. (Jun 10, 2024), [bit.ly/4g7xVkN](https://bit.ly/4g7xVkN).

In the last few years, state lawmakers have “introduced or advanced at least 26 bills” targeting life-affirming pregnancy centers for offering alternatives to abortion. Adam Edelman, *Democrats Eye a New Approach to Rein in Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, NBC News (May 18, 2023), [perma.cc/N8HUMYBQ?type=image](https://perma.cc/N8HUMYBQ?type=image). In early 2023, Colorado and New Jersey lawmakers introduced bills describing pro-life pregnancy centers as “fake clinics” that “use deceptive advertising to draw in vulnerable people seeking care to harass them with biased and inaccurate information about abortion and contraceptives.” See Dana DiFilippo, *Deceptive Marketing by Crisis Pregnancy Centers Prompts Bills*, Consumer Alert, New Jersey Monitor, (Jan. 17, 2023),

bit.ly/3MNihzB; Brandon Richard, *Opponents Respond to Bill Targeting Anti-Abortion Pregnancy Centers in Colorado*, Denver7 News, (Mar. 18, 2023), bit.ly/3KCRwex. The Illinois Senate passed a similar bill targeting pro-life pregnancy resource centers. See Andrew Adams & Nika Schoonover, *Illinois Senate Approves Measure to Crack Down on ‘Crisis Pregnancy Centers,’* Rockford Register Star (Apr. 3, 2023), bit.ly/3AqVrXl. A federal district court later preliminarily enjoined the law, calling it “both stupid and very likely unconstitutional.” See Hannah Meisel, *Federal Judge Temporarily Blocks Illinois Law Subjecting ‘Crisis Pregnancy Centers’ to Civil Liability*, Capitol News (Aug. 4, 2023), perma.cc/J4AL-KWQK. And in May 2021, the Connecticut legislature passed a law banning “deceptive advertising” by pregnancy centers. See Matthew McDonald, *Connecticut Crisis-Pregnancy Center Withdraws Lawsuit Against ‘Deceptive Advertising’ Ban*, National Catholic Register (Jan. 21, 2023), bit.ly/3A2jNWU. But after the law was challenged on First Amendment grounds, Attorney General William Tong conceded in the litigation that he was unaware of any women who had ever been deceived by pregnancy centers. *Id.*

Laws like these show no signs of stopping. Recently, members of the North Carolina General Assembly introduced House Bill 522, alleging that pregnancy centers engage in “deceptive practices,” and Senate Bill 247, attempting to strip crisis pregnancy centers of funding. See N.C. General Assembly, H.B. 522, Crisis Pregnancy Center Fraud Prevention Act, perma.cc/8JTE-KUR6; N.C. General Assembly, S.B.

247, Redirect Crisis Pregnancy Center Funds, [perma.cc/Z8BSJSFF](https://perma.cc/Z8BSJSFF).

Moreover, this pattern of harassment in North Carolina extends to invasive demands for records that burden pregnancy resource centers' operations. In April 2024, the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations issued a sweeping request to Life Care Pregnancy Center, invoking N.C. Gen. Stat. § 120-77 to compel five years of detailed documentation on contracts, grants, expenditures, staff information, supplies, medical tests, marketing materials, educational resources, and even client counseling practices. *See* Letter from Sen. Gladys A. Robinson et al. to Life Care Pregnancy Center (Apr. 3, 2024) (on file with counsel). This inquiry, purportedly to oversee state funds allocated through the Carolina Pregnancy Care Fellowship, probes deeply into sensitive areas such as volunteer applications, ultrasound procedures, HIPAA compliance, and advertising disclosures, mirroring the unsubstantiated investigations launched against centers like First Choice in New Jersey.

These demands exemplify the weaponization of regulatory authority to target disfavored viewpoints, imposing undue administrative costs and risking the exposure of confidential client and donor information. By forcing pregnancy centers to divulge internal policies, training materials, and service details under threat of penalties, such actions chill the expressive activities central to the mission of offering compassionate, life-affirming support. For organizations like Hand of Hope, which operate in the same state and



face similar scrutiny, these tactics not only deter potential supporters but also undermine the First Amendment protections essential to empower women facing unplanned pregnancies.

And earlier this year, activist groups petitioned the Attorneys General of Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas to investigate pregnancy centers. See Corynne McSherry, *EFF to State AGs: Time to Investigate Crisis Pregnancy Centers* (Jan. 28, 2025), [perma.cc/FMT4-JZVB](https://perma.cc/FMT4-JZVB); Corynne McSherry & Rindala Alajaji, *State AGs Must Act: EFF Expands Call to Investigate Crisis Pregnancy Centers* (Mar. 20, 2025), [perma.cc/MAD2-3Y3B](https://perma.cc/MAD2-3Y3B).

Opponents of pro-life pregnancy centers have also sought to impose overly strict licensing and inspection requirements to make it harder for pregnancy resource centers to operate. New York recently created a task force to investigate only those centers holding a pro-life viewpoint. Micaela Burrow, *New York Law Lets Pro-Abortion Activists Investigate Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, Pregnancy Help News, (Jun. 14, 2022), [bit.ly/41ako4W](https://bit.ly/41ako4W). A co-sponsor of the bill, New York state Senator Brad Holyman, said that the task force would report on “unlicensed, often misleading facilities that offer pregnancy-related services but don’t provide or refer for comprehensive reproductive healthcare” including abortion. *Id.* Legislators in Arizona, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, and New Jersey have also recently introduced legislation that would impose unnecessary and burdensome licensing requirements on pregnancy resource centers. Laura Morel, *Kentucky Lawmaker Pushes to Regulate Anti-*

*Abortion Pregnancy Centers After Reveal Investigation*, Reveal News, (Mar. 27, 2023), [bit.ly/418JpO0](https://bit.ly/418JpO0).

New Jersey Attorney General Platkin fits within this trend. This state attorney general has joined his colleagues in attempting to crack down on pregnancy resource centers by demanding they turn over sensitive records and private donor information. In 2022, Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson (now the state's governor) launched an investigation into the "sensitive records and materials" of two pro-life pregnancy centers, demanding confidential documents for no apparent reason other than the groups' pro-life views. Press Release: *After ADF sues, WA Attorney General Ends Illegal Campaign Against Pro-life Pregnancy Centers*, ADF (May 28, 2024), [bit.ly/3ZgjrIv](https://bit.ly/3ZgjrIv). Ferguson only dropped the investigation this year when a center sued, alleging that the investigation "caused it to lose insurance coverage and to pay seven times more for replacement coverage." *Id.*

Heartbeat International has been a focus of these attacks. In September 2023, California Attorney General Rob Bonta sued Heartbeat, attempting to punish its speech offering lifesaving information about abortion pill reversal—a viewpoint with which the Attorney General disagrees. See *The People of the State of California v. Heartbeat Int'l & RealOptions*, Heartbeat Int'l, [perma.cc/KK4D-BEPX](https://perma.cc/KK4D-BEPX). And earlier this year, New York Attorney General Letitia James brought a similar suit against Heartbeat. See Press Release: *Attorney General James Sues Anti-Abortion Group and 11 New York Crisis Pregnancy Centers for Promoting Unproven Abortion Reversal Treatment*, Office of N.Y. Att'y Gen. (May 6, 2024),

perma.cc/NZM8-NKKD. NIFLA and other New York pregnancy centers filed suit against James for violating their speech rights under the First and Fourteenth Amendments and obtained a preliminary injunction blocking James from “from silencing the constitutionally protected speech of these pro-life ministries while their lawsuit moves forward.” Press Release: *Federal Judge Blocks NY Attorney General Letitia James from Censoring Pregnancy Help Ministries*, Thomas More Society (Sept. 25, 2024), perma.cc/XN5U-2ZJH.

At bottom, states are “leveraging their [] taxpayer pockets by creating new laws with vague investigative powers often coupled with enforcement mechanisms designed to harass caring people that simply want to help women make a different choice than abortion.” Godsey, *supra*. But pregnancy resource centers “set the standard for true compassion and support for women.” *Id.* Indeed, “far from deceptively holding themselves out as providers of abortion, crisis pregnancy centers hold themselves out as providers of an alternative to abortion.” Jeff Jacoby, *Attacks on Pregnancy Centers, Like Attacks on Abortion Clinics, Should Be Intolerable*, Boston Globe (July 17, 2022), perma.cc/S78B-656D. And women “who find and utilize these pregnancy help services overwhelmingly give pregnancy centers 99 percent satisfaction ratings for the care they receive because it helps them through difficult times and puts them on a path toward success as parents.” Godsey, *supra*.; see Moira Gaul, *Fact Sheet: Pregnancy Centers—Serving Women and Saving Lives*, Charlotte Lozier Inst. (July 2021), bit.ly/3V0haig.

**B. Pregnancy centers also increasingly face threats of violence and violent attacks.**

Because of this political hostility, pregnancy resource centers have increasingly faced threats and violent attacks too. This trend has only intensified following the *Dobbs* decision.

After the *Dobbs* leak, “a wave of vandalism and violence [was] unleashed against crisis pregnancy centers around the country.” Jacoby, *supra*. “In one attack, arsonists firebombed CompassCare, a Christian pregnancy center in Buffalo, N.Y., shattering its windows and destroying much of its interior.” *Id.* In Longmont, Colorado, activists set the local pregnancy resource center on fire. *Id.* In Anchorage, Alaska, vandals smashed the door of the Community Pregnancy Center and covered its parking lot with nails. *Id.* In Orlando, Florida, activists “decapitated, mutilated, and dumped” three animals in front of a pro-life pregnancy center. Stephanie Buffamonte, *Decapitated, Mutilated, Animals Left at Florida Pro-life Pregnancy Center*, Fox35 (May 12, 2023), [perma.cc/9V99-Z2K4](https://perma.cc/9V99-Z2K4). And a group of pro-abortion extremists operating as “Jane’s Revenge” has declared “open season” on pregnancy resource centers across the country, promising to enact “revenge” against the centers, causing significant property damage, and spray-painting threatening graffiti slogans such as “If abortions aren’t safe neither are you.” Jacoby, *supra*.

These attacks have continued. After the 2024 Democratic National Convention, vandals splattered “red paint resembling blood” across a Chicago pregnancy center, cemented the doors shut, and spray painted

“the dead babies are in Gaza” on the building. Michael New, *A Pro-Life Pregnancy Help Center in Chicago is Vandalized*, Nat’l Rev. (Aug. 24, 2024), [bit.ly/413TiPB](https://bit.ly/413TiPB). Over a Labor Day weekend in 2024, perpetrators vandalized a North Carolina pregnancy center, plastering “Go to Planned Parenthood” across the center’s sign. Nancy Flanders, *Pregnancy Center in North Carolina Vandalized Over Labor Day Weekend*, Live Action (Sept. 4, 2024), [perma.cc/LP9V-HEYF](https://perma.cc/LP9V-HEYF). And the following November, activists painted ten swastikas on an Alaska pregnancy center and spread nails across the parking lot. Chris Klint, *FBI Seeks Suspect Who Painted Swastikas on Wasilla Pregnancy Center*, Alaska Public Media (Nov. 8, 2024), [perma.cc/RF3XGC5A](https://perma.cc/RF3XGC5A).

These examples are just the beginning. Indeed, centers have faced more than 100 attacks since the *Dobbs* leak in May 2022. See Patty Knap, *A New Low: Pregnancy Center Board Member’s Home Vandalized*, *Pregnancy Help News*, (Feb. 27, 2023), [bit.ly/3KhROsi](https://bit.ly/3KhROsi); see also New, *supra*. Activists have even targeted the private homes of those merely associated with crisis pregnancy centers. Knap, *supra* (noting that activists vandalized the home of a pregnancy resource center board member). And even though these actions clearly violate the Federal Access to Clinics Entrances Act, 18 U.S.C. §248, they have largely gone unprosecuted by the Department of Justice and ignored by pro-abortion officials.

As described above, Hands of Hope, Plaintiff First Choice, and other pregnancy resource centers are increasingly the target of violent and unjustified attacks to silence them. If this Court, like the Third Circuit,

allows states to wield their investigatory and regulatory authority to target pregnancy resource centers, that weaponization will know no end.

### CONCLUSION

For these reasons, the Court should reverse the decision below.

Respectfully submitted,

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