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Public Input Sought on Proposed Regulation on Limited-Service Pregnancy Center Disclaimers in Baltimore City

BALTIMORE, MD (April 15, 2010) – The Baltimore City Council passed Council Bill 09-0406, Limited-Service Pregnancy Centers – Disclaimers, which requires limited-service pregnancy centers to provide accurate information about available services to clients and potential clients. The Health Department is requesting public input on the regulations that will be used to enforce this new law.

Limited service-pregnancy centers, also referred to as crisis pregnancy centers, are organizations that advertise free pregnancy services to women. Their services usually include free pregnancy testing, options counseling, and short term material assistance for women with unplanned pregnancies. These centers, however, do not provide complete and comprehensive information regarding all pregnancy options and birth control prevention.

In Baltimore City, a large percentage of pregnancies are unplanned. The ability to plan pregnancies is associated with better birth outcomes, decreased poverty, and increased educational opportunities and workforce prospects.

It is imperative that all Baltimore City women have the ability to obtain factual and timely advice on all available health care options. This bill requires a limited-service pregnancy center to post conspicuously in its waiting area an easily readable disclaimer sign in English and Spanish that it does not provide or make referrals for abortion or comprehensive birth-control services. The new ordinance does not regulate or address what other material or signs a limited-service pregnancy center may choose to have in its waiting areas.

The interim Health Commissioner, who is responsible for enforcing the requirement, is seeking public input on the regulations. Detailed descriptions of the proposed regulations and instructions for public comment are online at www.baltimorehealth.org and are available at the address below. **The deadline for public comment is May 15, 2010.** Comments on this proposed regulation should be sent to bchd@baltimorecity.gov, or mailed to Baltimore City Health Department, 1001 E Fayette St., Baltimore, MD 21201, Attention: Legislative Affairs.

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