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**WLP Statement on Pennsylvania Giving Anti-Abortion Activists  
Money Designated to Help Poor Children**

*Pennsylvania double-funds crisis pregnancy center network Real Alternatives amid maternal health crisis without addressing public complaints alleging misuse of public funds or impact on public health*

PENNSYLVANIA – As [reported](#) in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania [once again double-funded](#) Real Alternatives, the controversial anti-abortion organization that pays itself with public funds to oversee 27 [“crisis pregnancy centers” in Pennsylvania](#).

The [2022-2023 Pennsylvania budget](#) directly funds Real Alternatives \$6,263,000 and double-funds the organization with \$1,000,000 siphoned from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a safety-net program meant to keep poor pregnant women and children afloat during a temporary crisis.

Funding for TANF has not increased since 1990. Currently, [only 25 out of every 100](#) Pennsylvania families that qualify for TANF actually receive the funds.

Crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) are anti-abortion organizations that seek to reach low-income people experiencing unintended pregnancies to prevent them from accessing abortion or contraception. Medical experts call CPCs [“legal but unethical”](#) because, despite efforts to mimic the cosmetic veneer of medical facilities, CPCs are generally not subject to regulatory oversight, offer little to no medical services, and have been repeatedly found to promote false and misleading misinformation about pregnancy, abortion, and contraception. Of particular concern in the post-Roe era is the fact that [CPCs collect clients’ sensitive medical and personal histories](#) but generally are [not subject to privacy protections](#).

“A budget is a statement of values. What does it say about Pennsylvania’s values that the state chose to invest millions of dollars into crisis pregnancy centers the day after [anti-abortion state lawmakers convened in the middle of the night to advance a constitutional amendment to eliminate our reproductive rights?](#),” **says WLP co-director Amal Bass**. “Pennsylvania should not be investing in organizations that deceive, deter, and delay pregnant people who are seeking reproductive healthcare.”

Pennsylvania’s diversion of \$7,263,000 to Real Alternatives comes in the wake of multiple investigations that found evidence that Real Alternatives has misused public funds and a

Commonwealth Court ruling highlighting the organization's efforts to hide how they spend public money.

- In 2017, Pennsylvania's former Auditor General found the organization "skimmed" public dollars. The public has never seen exactly how that money was spent.
- In late July, a three-judge panel of the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania issued [a ruling](#) in a public records case that sought to reveal how Real Alternatives spends public money. The Court ruled Real Alternatives can no longer refuse to share basic invoices that document how CPCs in their network spend public dollars. Real Alternatives was, however, successful in hiding contracts between RA and CPCs. In a scathing dissent to that portion of the ruling, Senior Judge Bonnie Leadbetter called these hidden contracts "a scheme to get DHS to unknowingly pay Real Alternatives for non-government activities" and "a device which re-routes government money through a 'private' contract in order to shield it from public scrutiny."
- In 2020, watchdog group [Campaign for Accountability](#) filed a [27-page public complaint](#) outlining serious allegations including that Real Alternatives "regularly pockets taxpayer money intended for AASP service providers for its own private use," executive salaries that "dwarf" the salaries of comparable non-profit executives, and has a curiously bloated advertising budget that has increased as the number of clients has decreased.
- Following this complaint, leaders of the Women's Health Caucus in the Pennsylvania Legislature [called on Attorney General Josh Shapiro to open an investigation into Real Alternatives](#).
- In late 2021, as part of The Alliance: State Advocates for Women's Health & Gender Equality, WLP published [Designed to Deceive](#), a report on the CPC industry across nine states including Pennsylvania. Our research found most CPCs in Pennsylvania promoted false & misleading information and that state-funded CPCs in the Real Alternatives network promoted "abortion pill reversal," a fake medical treatment based on [an unscientific claim](#) that a medication abortion can be "reversed," at higher rates than other CPCs in the Commonwealth.

"We want to know why the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is siphoning safety-net money away from poorest children in Pennsylvania and using it to fund [predatory experimentation](#) on low-income pregnant people," says **Tara Murtha, Director of Strategic Communications and co-author of *Designed to Deceive***. And why is Pennsylvania a piggy bank for anti-abortion activists fighting to hide how they spend taxpayer money in court? We call on state officials to address the serious allegations of malfeasance leveled against Real Alternatives and assess the effects CPC practices have on public health."

Real Alternatives also siphons TANF money away from poor children in Indiana, where [state lawmakers recently questioned their operations and grandiose, unsubstantiated claims](#). Real Alternatives operated with public money in Michigan until Governor Whitmer vetoed funding what [she called](#) "fake health centers that intentionally withhold information from women about their health."

So far, Pennsylvania has given Real Alternatives more than \$144 million.

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