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February 8, 2015

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

Alternatives Pregnancy Center is a student organization on Auraria Campus, a club with Metropolitan State University.

This vibrant club provides a place for students to put their beliefs about supporting and helping women into action by joining Alternatives at Auraria. The students on this large campus have many other dynamic and unique clubs to join also that might fit with their beliefs whether religious based or personal interest.

The passage of House Bill 15-1037 to protect religious student groups on higher education campuses is important and I ask for your support.

As an alumni of the University of Colorado at Denver I know the importance of collaborating with other students with similar beliefs.

The protection of the leaders and their founded beliefs in these groups maintains the integrity of a club. Without the needed protection of organization's leadership the importance of clubs based around religious, environmental, political or any other interest area would become obsolete.

College students find comfort and strength in joining clubs as a student with shared beliefs. Please be a part of protecting the integrity of these developing leaders on our thriving campuses.

Please pass HB 15-1037 for the protection of students, clubs and their beliefs.

Sincerely,

Marcy McGovern
Executive Director, Alternatives Pregnancy Center

Lauren O'Donnell
Metro State University

February 2, 2015

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

Statement of Lauren O'Donnell in Favor of House Bill 15 - 1037 Religious Freedom For Higher Education Student Groups

My name is Lauren O'Donnell from Arvada, Colorado. I attend Metropolitan State University in the Master's of Social Work program. I am in my concentration year and will graduate in May. I am involved with Alternatives Pregnancy Center on campus; I am the President of the club. Also, I am involved and a member of Phi Alpha honors society.

I support passage of House Bill 1037 to protect religious freedom for student groups on campus. Alternatives Pregnancy Center is a Christian organization that provides a meaningful alternative to abortion. All services provided on campus are free and confidential to women and their partners. Some of these services include pregnancy tests, options counseling, and scheduling of other appointments like STD testing. We will talk with women about all their options around pregnancy and help them with make an informed decision about their pregnancy.

Our student club is made up of other students who carry like-minded beliefs. During the times that our club/organization meets, the president (myself) always leads the meetings with our officers and members. Not only do we just provide services for women on campus, we also participate in a wide range of school activities. For example, we will be at volunteer fairs and bring our mobile RV to campus to provide STD testing. We all serve under the same standards and values.

Religious groups and other clubs are a large part of any campus environment. I find it very comforting to find people that believe the same things I do. I am able to connect with these individuals and build life-long relationships. It allows those on campus to find groups of people that are similar, which provides intimacy and tight knit communities throughout campus, making such a large place smaller and more connected.

By having religious clubs on campus a variety of cultures are integrated into one area. Even though these groups are from different cultures, it brings a richness and variety. All the organizations work well together and get along for the most part. For example, Alternatives has a relationship with the Women's Right organization; even though we do not believe all the same things we are able to work closely and get along. I think that religious organizations bring a variety of cultural values; however, those differences bring individuals closer.

Individuals on a campus like Auraria are looking to be a part of something bigger. Sometimes that is a sports team or other times it is a club. College students are busy people and they only want to get involved with something they truly believe in. Along with believing in the goal of an

organization, students want to get along with others in the group. I would say that is why most people get involved is to build relationships. If a club or organization has a set of values but not everyone believes them, I would find it incredibly difficult to believe that people would get involved.

It is vital for the leaders of an organization to carry and lead with the same belief systems as those of the organization-the leaders and officers are the members that point the direction of the organization.

The leaders are the ones that keep the organization participating in events that align with the values of the group. Also, if a leader of the group believes something different then its members, there will be division and hostility between members, which leads to a hostile environment and removes the purpose of a club.

It is so important to our organization that we have a leader who has the same religious and ethical values as ourselves. The protection of the leadership of clubs is imperative to the success of student groups and campus vitality. Without clubs, students will not be able to get involved and will the campus feeling more like a commuter campus. It is crucial that we as a state keep universities thriving.

It is our responsibility to make sure that the things we stand for and strongly believe in do not become compromised by putting a leader or leaders in a position they do not fully believe in. If we do that, there will be lack of culture and variety throughout Metro's campus. Metropolitan State University has always been known for its variety of culture and community-that is why I support this bill-keeping the core values of what Metro stands for.

Thank you for taking the time to read my remarks. I ask that you please support passage of House Bill 15-1037.

Sincerely,

Lauren O'Donnell
Metropolitan State University
President-Alternatives Pregnancy Center - Auraria Campus