

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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September 22, 2025

**SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: [nicole.hendrickson@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:nicole.hendrickson@gwinnettcountry.com)**

Nicole Love Hendrickson  
Chair  
Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners  
75 Langley Dr.  
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Re: County Funding of Crisis Pregnancy Center

Dear Chairwoman Hendrickson and Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners' ("The Board") approval of funding for a crisis pregnancy center. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with over 42,000 members across the country, including more than 600 members in Georgia. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

A concerned Gwinnett County resident reported that on August 5, 2025 the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners voted to approve \$450,000 in Department of Housing and Urban Development funding for a local faith-based crisis pregnancy center, the Georgia Wellness Group. An article published by Atlanta News First reports that this group was previously under the Obria name, and the national Obria website still lists it as a clinic.<sup>1</sup> Obria is a national health nonprofit whose 2024 impact statement makes its religious mission clear:<sup>2</sup>

Our pro-life mission is at the heart of all we do. With a steadfast commitment to life-affirming care, we're honored to serve our patients with compassion, dignity, and respect every day.

Their mission statement is:

Being led by God, we provide loving, compassionate, high-quality and comprehensive reproductive, medical health services consistent with the inherent value and dignity of every person.

While, according to an article published in the Gwinnett Daily Post, Georgia Wellness Group appears to be cutting ties with Obria, Robin Mauck, CEO of Georgia Wellness Group, still recognizes that they are

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<sup>1</sup> Faith-based health care clinic seeks \$450,000 from Gwinnett County, <https://www.atlantaneewsfirst.com/2025/07/23/faith-based-health-care-clinic-seeks-450000-gwinnett-county/>; Obria Affiliates, <https://obria.org/affiliate/>.

<sup>2</sup> Obria Impact Report 2024, <https://obria2023impactreport.my.canva.site/2024-obria-impact-report>.

faith-based, and is quoted as saying: “Yes we are faith-based, but that isn’t a deterrent from being able to see us.”<sup>3</sup>

A more recent article published by Atlanta News First also outlines that this proposal was passed prior to public comment being allowed during the August 5 meeting, and that many local organizations have been outspoken against the proposal.<sup>4</sup>

We write to request the Board refrain from transferring \$450,000 in public funds to Georgia Wellness Group and refrain from awarding grants to religious organizations in the future. It is both constitutionally questionable and poor policy for Gwinnett County to fund an overtly religious organization that does not and cannot separate its religious mission from the medical services it claims to provide.

Despite the claim by Robin Mauck that “[Georgia Wellness Group is] a real clinic” with “board certified licensed physicians and medical staff” that “do[es] not coerce women,” numerous studies have shown that crisis pregnancy centers (“CPCs”), like the Georgia Wellness Group, often sacrifice sound medical advice and basic ethical standards to spread their religious message.<sup>5</sup> In 2002, the Center for Reproductive Rights found that CPCs misinformed their clients about the consequences of abortions, including false claims that abortion causes breast cancer, sterility, and psychological damage.<sup>6</sup> In 2006, U.S. Representative Henry Waxman released a study with similar findings, also disclosing that many CPCs incorrectly told clients that abortion would interfere with a woman’s ability to bear children in the future.<sup>7</sup> Studies in multiple states have found that CPCs incorrectly tell pregnant teens that condoms are ineffective in reducing pregnancy and the transmission of certain STIs, and that abortion causes mental illness.<sup>8</sup> Joanne Rosen, an associate lecturer at the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, concluded an article about CPCs by writing that “collectively, [CPCs’] practices jeopardize the health of women and their children, and a public health response is warranted.”<sup>9</sup> These deceptive tactics are obviously employed to scare women from using contraception or seeking abortions, both of which CPCs oppose for purely religious reasons. It is inappropriate and irresponsible for Gwinnett County to provide grant funding to a CPC.

While Gwinnett County’s citizens are certainly free to seek out religious organizations’ support and services, facilitating and funding that relationship is beyond the scope of a secular government. The government cannot subsidize certain religions or dispense special financial benefits to religious organizations or ministries. The First Amendment’s Establishment Clause requires government neutrality between religions, and between religion and nonreligion. As the Supreme Court recently affirmed, “the First Amendment mandates government neutrality between religions” *Cath. Charities Bureau, Inc. v. Wis. Lab. & Indus. Rev. Comm’n*, 605 U.S. 238, 241 (2025); *See also, McCreary Cnty v. ACLU*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968); *Everson v. Bd. of Educ. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://bit.ly/4pG0g7u>;

<https://www.atlantaneWSfirst.com/2025/07/23/faith-based-health-care-clinic-seeks-450000-gwinnett-county/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://bit.ly/4pG0g7u>.

<sup>5</sup> Gwinnett County commissioners approve \$450K in federal funding for faith-based pregnancy clinic, <https://bit.ly/3VuX5Sk>.

<sup>6</sup> Center for Reproductive Rights, *Crisis Pregnancy Centers Seek Public Funds and Legitimacy*, 11 REPROD. FREEDOM NEWS, July/Aug. 2002, at 4.

<sup>7</sup> United States House of Representatives Committee On Government Reform, *False and Misleading Health Information Provided by Federally Funded Pregnancy Resource Centers* (2006), available at [chsourcebook.com/articles/waxman2.pdf](https://chsourcebook.com/articles/waxman2.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *See, e.g.*, NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation, *The Truth About Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, available at <https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/6.-The-Truth-About-Crisis-Pregnancy-Centers.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Rosen, *The Public Health Risks of Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, 2012, PERSP. ON SEXUAL & REPRO. HEALTH, Sept. 2010, 40(3):201–4.

15–16 (1947); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 53 (1985). The First Amendment prohibits “sponsorship, financial support, and active involvement of the sovereign in religious activity.” *Walz v. NY Tax Comm’n*, 397 U.S. 664, 668 (1970) (emphasis added); see also *Mitchell v. Helms*, 530 U.S. 793, 819 (2000); *Bowen v. Kendrick*, 487 U.S. 589, 621 (1988); *Roemer v. Bd. of Pub. Works*, 426 U.S. 736, 754–55 (1976). This means that the Board cannot give a nearly half a million dollar grant to a religious organization that entangles its work with its religious message and purpose. See, e.g., *Levitt v. Comm. for Pub. Educ. & Religious Liberty*, 412 U.S. 472, 480 (1973) (“[T]he State is constitutionally compelled to assure that the state-supported activity is not being used for religious indoctrination.”).

By partnering with and leading citizens to an explicitly Christian organization, the County will signal blatant favoritism toward religion over nonreligion, and Christianity over all other faiths. Using public funds to support services from Christian organizations rather than secular alternatives needlessly marginalizes and fails to adequately serve Gwinnett County residents who are part of the thirty-seven percent of Americans who are non-Christians, and the nearly one in three Americans who are now religiously unaffiliated.<sup>10</sup> Further it is the duty of the County to assure information—not disinformation, propaganda, and dogma—is disseminated via publicly-supported resources.

Out of respect for the First Amendment and the diversity of the community, we urge the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners to rescind this grant and refrain from transferring \$450,000 in public funds to Georgia Wellness Group. Please respond in writing with the steps the Board is taking to address this matter so that we may inform the person who contacted us. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha F. Lawrence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Samantha F. Lawrence  
Staff Attorney  
Freedom From Religion Foundation

SFL:wem

**CC: Kirkland.Carden@gwinnettcountry.com, Ben.Ku@GwinnettCounty.com,  
Jasper.Watkins@gwinnettcountry.com, Matthew.Holtkamp@GwinnettCounty.com**

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<sup>10</sup> Gregory A. Smith, et. al, *Religious ‘Nones’ in America: Who They Are and What They Believe*, Pew Research Center, Jan. 24, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>.