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Embargoed until May 16, 2023 at 10:30 AM CST
LIVESTREAM AVAILABLE at [CarbondaleCrisis.com](https://www.carbondalecrisis.com)

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Coalition Life Files Lawsuit on 100-Foot Bubble Zone in Carbondale, Illinois

The suit against the City of Carbondale fights back against civil rights violations and seeks declarative relief and a permanent injunction against the ordinance.

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:30 AM CST ON Tuesday, May 16, 2023 – Carbondale, IL. – Pro-life group Coalition Life announced today the group is fighting back against civil rights violations in the City of Carbondale. A lawsuit filed today in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois against the City of Carbondale, Illinois calls out unconstitutional content-based restrictions on expression in the city’s “bubble zone” ordinance, which was unanimously passed on January 10, 2023.

“This appallingly discriminatory ordinance is an attempt to silence American citizens and is a direct assault on our civil rights and religious freedoms,” said Brian Westbrook, Executive Director of Coalition Life. “On January 10th, I stood before the Carbondale City Council and promised that if this ordinance passed and was enforced, Coalition Life would take legal action. Today is that day. And I assure you that we have both the legal resources and stamina to fight this matter all the way to the Supreme Court.”

The ordinance creates an irrational and unreasonably large 100-foot zone around “any entrance door” to a “hospital, medical clinic or healthcare facility” in the City as well as an arbitrary “anti-speech bubble” around persons inside this zone, prohibiting freedom of speech. According to the unfair and overly-broad language in the ordinance, anyone knowingly approaching within eight feet of someone in the public way “for the purpose of passing a leaflet or handbill to, displaying a sign to, or engaging in oral protest, education, or counseling” without that person’s consent can be prosecuted.

The lawsuit, filed on May 16, 2023, seeks an injunction prohibiting the enforcement of this egregious ordinance and a declaration that it is unconstitutional on its face. The suit asserts that the city’s bubble zone “ lacks any standards or criteria to guide those charged with enforcing it and thus gives government officials unbridled discretion to determine which speech activities are, and which are not, permissible within the bubbles it creates.” The chilling effect on free speech involves at least 40 healthcare facilities in

Carbondale and applies to any citizen engaged in oral protest, education, counseling or offering literature for any reason. The full text of the lawsuit will be available at: CarbondaleCrisis.com.

In filing the suit, Coalition Life is working with the Thomas More Society, a non-profit, public interest law firm recently involved in the high-profile case of Mark Houck, the pro-life activist who was acquitted after being wrongfully charged with assault.

“Thomas More Society has been on the leading edge of protecting the rights of pro-life people and organizations for years,” said Peter Breen, Executive Vice President & Head of Litigation, Thomas More Society. “We feel strongly that this 100-foot bubble zone ordinance is a direct infringement on constitutionally-protected rights, and we are prepared to take this fight all the way to the highest court.”

As a professional sidewalk counseling organization, Coalition Life has been working in front of abortion facilities in Missouri and Illinois for more than 11 years. The Bubble Zone Ordinance substantially burdens Coalition Life’s exercise of Religion because speech and outreach in reaching out to abortion-minded women is motivated by sincerely held religious beliefs.

“Our sidewalk counselors are peaceful and loving people who simply want to help women,” said Westbrook. “There are thousands of women we have helped during a very difficult time in their lives and they want us on that sidewalk to help others. We will continue to do whatever it takes to be there for them. We must stand firm for our right to do this work and by extension the rights of all citizens to speak freely in public spaces.”

About Coalition Life

Coalition Life is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization with a Mission of ENDING Abortion... Peacefully and Prayerfully. Founded in St. Louis, Missouri in 2011 by Brian Westbrook as Coalition for Life St. Louis, the organization operates a pregnancy resource center in St. Louis, provides sidewalk counseling at four sites in Illinois, and continues to grow as a national leader in the frontline effort to provide alternatives to abortion. Differentiated by its professional staff of sidewalk counselors and proven approach to successfully reach women who desire options and resources, Coalition Life created and perfected “The St. Louis Method” of sidewalk counseling that has resulted in more than 3,600 turnarounds outside of abortion facilities and countless lives saved. For more information visit CoalitionLife.com.

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Interview requests: For interviews with Brian Westbrook of Coalition Life: Contact Melissa Barreca at mbarreca@coalitionlife.com or call/text 636-735-3240, based in St. Louis, Missouri (CST). For interviews with Peter Breen of Thomas More Society: Contact Tom Ciesielka at tc@tcpr.net or call/text 312-403-1333, based in Chicago, Illinois (CST).