

Targeted Regulations on Abortion Providers Talking Points

The Board of Health must completely repeal and rewrite the current regulations of women's health centers to protect women's health and preserve access to comprehensive reproductive care.

All health professions should be regulated, but these politically motivated restrictions aren't necessary for patients' safety. Instead, these restrictions endanger women's health. We all want women to be safe, but doctors and medical groups oppose these regulations because they aren't necessary for patients' safety. Medically unnecessary restrictions designed to shut down health centers jeopardize women's health by making it more difficult for women to access safe and legal abortions, along with the comprehensive, preventative health care these centers provide, like cancer screenings.

Abortion is an extremely safe and common procedure. These restrictions single out abortion providers even though other procedures, like colonoscopies, have a much higher rate of complication, and are commonly performed in similar outpatient clinics. Yet those clinics and doctors are not submitted to these types of regulations, and the politicians pushing for restrictive laws are not calling for them to be. Rather, they have singled out only doctors who provide abortions. The real motivation behind these laws has nothing to do with women's health and everything to do with shutting down clinics and preventing women from getting safe and legal abortions.

Current regulations of Virginia women's health centers are about politics, not medicine.



Three years ago, the Virginia Dept. of Health convened a panel of six top medical experts from across the state to initially draft the regulations. Those experts recommended evidence-based regulations that protected women's health, but the Dept. of Health ignored their own doctors' recommendations and drafted regulations based in politics, not medicine. During the process of final decision-making by the Virginia Board of Health in 2012, then Attorney General Cuccinelli pressured the Board behind the scenes, bullying them into approving restrictions designed to shut down health centers. Now, abortion providers must meet building requirements designed for new hospitals; requirements that no other health care facility in Virginia must meet - despite the fact that first-trimester abortion is a common and extremely safe outpatient procedure.

Doctors, health care professionals, and a majority of Virginians oppose these regulations.

- A 2013 statewide survey showed a majority of Virginians (58%) oppose the medically unnecessary and burdensome regulations of women's health care centers that provide critical and comprehensive health care, including abortion.
- In September 2012, a diverse group of 177 doctors and medical experts from across the state organized and independently funded a public letter and *Richmond Times-Dispatch* advertisement, writing that "We must not travel down a dangerous slippery slope where we allow political forces to dictate medical care."
- In October 2012, Dr. Karen Remley, the Virginia Health Commissioner, [resigned her position](#) due to the intrusion of politics into women's health care.

If the regulations are not repealed and rewritten, tens of thousands of Virginia women and families will lose access to critical medical care. Five women's health centers in Virginia have already been forced to close due to these burdensome and medically-unnecessary regulations. If the regulations remain unchanged additional health centers will close, cutting off women's access to preventative and critical health care.

By forcing health centers to close, the current regulations restrict access to critical cancer screenings and annual care for thousands of Virginia women – particularly women in low-income areas, who rely heavily on these services and facilities for life-saving health care.