



DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON · DIOCESE OF RICHMOND
Representing the Virginia Catholic Bishops in Public Policy Matters

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Virginia Catholic Conference Favors Proposed Abortion Center Regulations In Comments Submitted to State Board of Health

The Virginia Catholic Conference yesterday submitted public comments to the Virginia Board of Health supporting proposed regulations on abortion centers, one week after the Conference announced support of the proposal. The Conference has also encouraged members of its advocacy network to submit comments before the comment period ends September 15.

In written comments, Executive Director Jeff Caruso said the regulations proposed by Department of Health medical experts “would provide much needed improvement to the health and safety standards applicable to Virginia’s abortion centers.” The Conference is the public-policy representative for Virginia’s Catholic bishops and their two dioceses, which include almost 700,000 parishioners.

“Abortion is not health care because it ends lives rather than healing them,” Caruso said. “The existence of the abortion industry under the guise of ‘health care’ is, however, a sad and tragic reality in our Commonwealth and our country. Given this reality, the abortion industry should, and indeed must, be required to meet reasonable, commonsense health and safety standards to protect women’s health.”

The full text of the statement by Jeff Caruso follows:

Dear Virginia Board of Health Members:

I write to convey support for the regulations proposed by medical experts at the Department of Health to improve the health and safety conditions at Virginia’s abortion centers. I do so on behalf of the Virginia Catholic Conference, which is the public-policy agency of Virginia’s Catholic bishops and their two dioceses (serving nearly 700,000 parishioners statewide).

Abortion is not health care because it ends lives rather than healing them. The existence of the abortion industry under the guise of "health care" is, however, a sad and tragic reality in our Commonwealth and our country. Given this reality, the abortion industry should, and indeed must, be required to meet reasonable, commonsense health and safety standards to protect women's health. It is from this perspective that the Conference has long participated in the debate over abortion center licensing and regulation. This perspective is informed too by the assistance our Church frequently provides to women experiencing pregnancies under challenging circumstances. This help includes providing support and resources to enable women in these situations to make life-affirming decisions. It also includes support when women who have had abortions later seek counseling and healing. In both cases, the importance of attentive, compassionate concern for the health and well-being of women is at the heart of our Church's services.

Those who consider themselves "pro-life" and those who consider themselves "pro-choice" should certainly be able to agree that Virginia's abortion centers must be licensed, regulated, and inspected to protect women's health and safety. The regulations proposed by the Department of Health are reasonable, common sense measures to ensure, for example, that abortion centers:

have life-saving equipment on hand;

abide clearly defined building guidelines (e.g., that hallways be wide enough to allow safe passage of gurneys in the event that patients require emergency transport for greater medical attention);

have written policies regarding infection prevention, fire safety, and the use of ultrasounds;

report patient deaths resulting from abortion procedures; and

have physicians on site until patients are ready to be discharged.

These provisions are but a few examples of the many ways the proposed regulations would provide much needed improvement to the health and safety standards applicable to Virginia's abortion centers. Thank you for considering these proposals and the comments I have provided in support of them.

Sincerely,

Jeff Caruso
Executive Director
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