

Lake County Right to Life Requests Closure of Abortion Facility over Fire Violations

Patients Are Seen in Basement with Only One Exit and Clutter Exists throughout Building

Gary, Ind. – Lake County Right to Life held a press conference today demanding the closure of Gary's abortion facility, Friendship Family Planning. The organization based its request on alleged fire code violations including failure to have two exits from the basement level where the doctor sees patients and improper storage of combustible materials. Lake County Right to Life members outlined their current concerns and the facility's history of fire code violations in a letter delivered today to Gary Fire Chief Teresa Everett. The letter reads:

Dear Chief Everett,

This letter is to bring to your attention new fire hazards reported by the Indiana Department of Health (ISDH) in their recently released survey of the Friendship Family Planning Clinic (survey enclosed) located at 3700 Broadway, Gary, Indiana. These violations are in addition to the fire code infractions previously reported that remain uncorrected.

To review:

August 8, 2012

A routine licensure survey conducted by the ISDH cited multiple deficiencies in addition to "great amounts of storage and clutter extending from floor to almost ceiling." The most concerning violation: "It was observed that there are two exits in the facility and that both lock by key from the inside." p. 15. (Survey enclosed).

Multiple Dates - Fall 2012

Citizens contacted the fire department on several occasions to note that the facility kept the door opening to the parking lot locked from the inside and that the door has no emergency crash bar. The key is kept on the doorframe on the opposite side. A door resembling a garage door covers the front door.

December 4, 2012.

Following repeated reports of fire hazards to the Gary Fire Department (GFD) with no remedy, concerns were presented to the Gary Common Council.

December 6, 2012

After completing an inspection of the facility, the GFD noted in a Violation Notice that, "The storage rooms on the lower and main level are filled to capacity have boxes up to the ceiling." (Notice enclosed)

January 14, 2013

The GFD conducted a follow up inspection of the facility and reported the following on the Violation Notice: "The rooms where there were boxes stored up to the ceiling on the main level had been reduced to where the ceiling could be seen. However, this does not resolve the problem of storage in this building, in these rooms the height of stored material which includes antiquated medical equipment and medical supplies is about six feet (72") in both rooms. In the interest of life and public safety, only equipment necessary for day to day operations shall be kept in this building and the rest placed in a storage unit off premises or a storage pod transferred to your location for use. There is a roll-down gate on the Broadway side that needs to be kept open while the building is occupied." p. 2 (Notice enclosed)

December 9-10, 2014

The ISDH completed a routine survey of the Friendship Family Planning facility. The recently released survey report indicates previously cited violations regarding the storage of combustible materials has not been resolved. Several additional fire hazards were reported. The most troubling is that: "The facility failed to have two exits remote from each other in the level that was below grade." The patient examination and procedure rooms are located on this below grade level. p. 35

We are calling for the immediate closure of the Friendship Family Planning Clinic at 3600 Broadway, Gary, Indiana, until these conditions are corrected and the facility meets fire code as established by the City of Gary and the State of Indiana.

We urge the Gary Fire Department to take appropriate action to protect the lives and public safety of patients and employees alike.

Sincerely,

Len Reynolds, President, Lake County Right to Life
Lynne Scherschel, Vice-president, Lake County Right to Life

A copy of the letter has also been sent to Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, Gary Common Council President Kyle W. Allen, Sr., and Indiana State Fire Marshal James L. Greeson.

"The Friendship Family Planning facility, operated by abortion doctor Ulrich Klopfer, should no longer be allowed to put patients and employees at risk," stated Lynne Scherschel, Vice President of Lake County Right to Life. "The facility is one emergency away from a life-threatening situation for patients and staff if no one steps in to correct these dangerous conditions. We urge Chief Everett and the Gary Fire Department to act swiftly. These fire violations have gone on too long. We value life at all stages and we do not want to see anyone get hurt."

The letter to Everett and the 2014 licensure survey report are available at www.lakecortl.org.

Lake County Right to Life, based in Highland, Ind., exists to protect life regardless of age, health or degree of dependency. Visit www.lakecortl.org for more.

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On Dec. 9 and 10, Indiana State Department of Health inspectors found...

Lake County Right to Life has been monitoring the fire violations at Friendship Family Planning for many years. In August 2012, the group reviewed a state inspection report that claimed, “great amounts of storage and clutter extending from floor to almost ceiling.” Inspectors also reported, “there are two exits in the facility and that both lock by key from the inside.” Lake County Right to Life members brought these concerns to the Gary Fire Department, but no action was taken. On Dec. 4, 2012, the group presented their concerns to the Gary Common Council. Following the council meeting, the Gary Fire Department inspected Friendship Family Planning on Dec. 6, 2012. Because the facility was out of compliance during the first fire inspection, a second inspection was scheduled for Jan. 14, 2013. Issues were still not corrected, so another fire inspection was scheduled for Jan. 25, 2013. Lake County Right to Life isn’t aware if that inspection occurred, and if it did, what the outcome was.

In 2013 and 2014, Lake County Right to Life observed the abortion staff continuing to lock the building from the inside during business hours, in direct violation of the law and orders from the Gary Fire Department.