



Local Planned Parenthood stops abortions



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(Photo: By Pat McDonogh, The CJ)

Planned Parenthood temporarily has stopped offering abortion services at its new clinic in downtown Louisville while it addresses objections the state raised Thursday about its license application for the facility.

But in a letter Friday to Kentucky officials, Planned Parenthood claimed the organization had the state's approval when it began offering abortion services Jan. 21 at the clinic on South Seventh Street.

Abortion services began "only after receiving assurance from your office, in emails dated Dec. 1 and Dec. 7, that it would be appropriate while we await a survey," said Suzannah Wilson Overholt, chief operating officer for Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky, or PPINK, in a letter to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Under state licensing procedures, officials must conduct a survey, or inspection, of a health facility after it begins operation before issuing a license. Kentucky officials have not yet conducted that survey.

News that Planned Parenthood had begun offering abortions for the first time in Kentucky touched off a political firestorm when PPINK announced it Thursday. The organization already offers abortion services in Indiana.

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Planned Parenthood adds abortions; Bevin irate

Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin, an anti-abortion Republican who took office Dec. 8, accused Planned Parenthood on Thursday of "openly and knowingly operating an unlicensed abortion facility in clear violation of the law."

That same day, his administration ordered Planned Parenthood to "cease and desist" providing abortion services at the clinic, saying it had found two deficiencies in the license application it filed Nov. 19.

Planned Parenthood said Thursday it had applied for a license and "commenced services under the guidance of the Office of Inspector General, the cabinet office that is responsible for licensing health facilities."

The agency began offering abortions in Louisville about a month after moving into the new building.

Thursday's letter from Kentucky's acting inspector general, Stephanie Hold, said the state found two deficiencies in Planned Parenthood's license application. The letter said the new clinic lacked adequate written agreements with an acute care hospital and an ambulance service that are required in case a patient develops unforeseen complications.

Hold's letter said the agreements Planned Parenthood provided were out of date and missing some information.

The absence of those agreements "prevent us from continuing our review of your application at this time," the letter said. In the meantime, Planned Parenthood is directed to "cease and desist" offering any abortion services, the letter said.

Planned Parenthood, in Overholt's reply, said it will provide updated agreements "as soon as possible."

Friday's developments capped a week of activity in Frankfort and Louisville related to abortion.

The Courier-Journal [reported Friday that Bevin's budget proposal](#) would bar any state funds for Planned Parenthood clinics.

Betty Cockrum, president and CEO of PPINK, told the CJ on Thursday that Planned Parenthood doesn't get any state money now.

Federal law prohibits use of Medicaid funds for abortion services.

The organization does bill Medicaid for services other than abortion such as medical exams, birth control and cancer screenings. Planned Parenthood won a federal court fight in 2013 with Indiana, which tried to bar the organization from receiving any Medicaid funds.

Planned Parenthood ended a contract with Louisville for family planning services on Dec. 31 and has received no local tax dollars since it began offering abortion services, [the CJ also reported Friday.](#)

Also, Bevin met Friday with Kentucky's four Roman Catholic bishops. Louisville Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, a staunch opponent of abortion, posted a photo of the group at Bevin's office on Twitter afterward.

Cecelia Price, a spokeswoman for the Louisville archdiocese, did not say whether the subject of abortion or the Planned Parenthood controversy was discussed. She said Kurtz was not available for comment and that the bishops met privately with Bevin "about a variety of issues related to the common good in the commonwealth."



Kentucky's Roman Catholic bishops met with Gov. Matt Bevin Friday. (Photo: Twitter)

Meanwhile, the General Assembly appeared poised to pass a bill expanding "informed consent" requirements for women seeking abortions, a measure that repeatedly has cleared the Republican-controlled Senate in recent years but stalled in the House where Democrats hold the majority.

Women already must wait 24 hours to obtain an abortion after they have received counseling and information about the procedure, generally provided by telephone.

But Senate Bill 4 seeks to require women to receive the counseling in person 24 hours beforehand. Opponents argued that would impose an unfair burden on women, many of them poor, who would have to travel twice to Louisville or Lexington, the only cities where abortions now are performed by a private clinic.

SB 4 passed the Senate Jan. 19. The House passed it Thursday but only after amending it to allow women to receive the counseling via live telehealth services.

The Senate, which must approve the House changes, may vote on the measure Monday.

Backers of the bill have argued the measure ensures women get full information about a decision they might regret.

THE COURIER-JOURNAL

'Informed consent' abortion bill passes House

Abortion-rights supporters have long fought such requirements they say are merely a way to make abortion more difficult and to shame women, pointing out such measures are not required for any other medical procedures.

Cockrum, with Planned Parenthood, said such measures introduce additional barriers to women in difficult circumstances.

"None of that adds value to what is a very private personal decision," she said.

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