

UVM Medical Center to offer elective abortions

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The University of Vermont Medical Center revoked a longstanding policy and will now offer elective abortion procedures.

The UVM Medical Center board of trustees voted unanimously to repeal the previous policy in Sept. 2017, said Dr. Ira Bernstein, chief of women's health care services and the chair of OB-GYN and reproductive services at UVM Medical Center.



“This is a positive step for our patients,” Bernstein said.

The previous policy was established in 1972 and only permitted termination when it was medically necessary, stated UVM Medical Center board chairwoman Allie Stickney in a Jan. 26 Burlington Free Press article.


The decision to repeal the policy was suggested by medical staff, Bernstein said. Staff felt that “comprehensive family planning services” should be available to patients, and that medical decisions should be made by patients and their providers, he said.

However, the Fanny Allen campus in Colchester, which is owned by the catholic network Covenant Health, will not provide elective termination.

Fanny Allen also does not provide family planning services, contraceptive care or permanent sterilization, in accordance with their arrangement with UVM Medical Center, Bernstein said.

Students have expressed their support for the move to allow elective abortions, including junior Hailey Cray, a premedical student with a Gender and Women's studies minor.

“Two words: long overdue,” Cray said.

 All medical staff will also still have the right to “opt-out” of performing elective termination if they

feel it is ethically or morally appropriate, he said.

Ellen Kane, spokeswoman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, was surprised at the lack of “public disclosure” regarding the policy change she said in a Jan. 25 Burlington Free Press interview. A UVM Medical Center spokeswoman said that the repeal of the policy was not publicized per hospital policy, according to a Jan. 26 Burlington Free Press article.

“This is a huge win for access to reproductive health services for members of our community who may otherwise be limited in accessing abortion services,” junior Teremy Garen, president of Planned Parenthood Generation Action at UVM, said.

“We believe that all people must have the right to obtain medically safe, legal abortions under dignified conditions and at a reasonable cost,” Garen said.

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