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# Planned Parenthood quietly built new abortion facility in Fairview Heights

From staff reports 9 min ago

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The exterior of a new Planned Parenthood facility that is under construction in Fairview Heights, shown in an Oct. 2, 2019 photo. Photo by Kim Bell.

A new abortion facility in Fairview Heights under construction by Planned Parenthood since last year was built in secret to avoid protesters and delay, CBS News reported Wednesday.

The clinic is about 13 miles from the Planned Parenthood clinic in St. Louis, which is the only facility in Missouri that provides abortions.

Colleen McNicholas, the chief medical officer of Planned Parenthood for the St. Louis region and southwest Missouri, said construction on the 18,000-square-foot clinic began last year.

A Post-Dispatch reporter who visited the site on Wednesday found no indications it was a Planned Parenthood facility.

In an interview with CBS, McNicholas said the organization wanted to complete the project "as expeditiously as possible because we saw the writing on the wall - patients need better access, so we wanted to get it open as quickly as we could."

The clinic could begin taking patients later this month.

Some of the people building the clinic, which is across the street from a hotel and near a TGI Friday's restaurant, said they just learned this week that it would be a Planned Parenthood facility.

Sam Walker, who works for Bethalto Glass, said Wednesday his supervisor told him this week what the building was.

"I'm fine with it," he said. "I'm just here to do a job." He added that his mother worked at the Hope Clinic in Granite City when he was in high school, and he supports abortion rights.

Walker also said that all the paperwork he has seen at the job site for the past several months said "MOB" for medical office building. Blueprints and construction paperwork use the same designation.

Blythe Bloss, 29, of O'Fallon, Ill., was delivering construction materials to the clinic Wednesday morning. That's when she learned from a reporter that it was a Planned Parenthood facility.

"I can absolutely see why they kept it secret, especially in this area when you have strong beliefs on both sides," said Bloss.

She said she underwent an abortion when she was 21 and had no qualms telling people about it. But she added that it was a personal choice.

Missouri has passed a series of laws restricting abortions, including state-mandated counseling and a 72-hour waiting period. The state's new ban on all abortions at or after eight weeks was put on hold by a federal judge.

In Illinois, however, lawmakers have loosened restrictions and expanded access to abortions.

*Kim Bell of the Post-Dispatch contributed information to this article.*

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