



POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

'Abortion care hangs by a thread,' Planned Parenthood head says as new clinic opens

BY JIM MORRILL

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Dr. Leana Wen, left, president, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and Jenny Black, CEO and president, Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, talk during an interview at the new Planned Parenthood South Atlantic facility in Charlotte on Tuesday, June 4, 2019. DAVID T. FOSTER III DTFOSTER@CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM

For Planned Parenthood, Tuesday was a day to celebrate — and to worry.

In Charlotte, the group's national president helped cut the ribbon for a new health clinic near uptown that offers abortion services.

In St. Louis, the group was in court fighting to keep Missouri's last abortion clinic open.

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“There’s no question that abortion care hangs by a thread,” Dr. Leana Wen, Planned Parenthood’s national president, told the Observer. “This is a state of emergency for women’s health.”

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GET OFFER

Wen was in Charlotte to inaugurate the group's new facility off Kings Drive. When it opens to patients next month, it will be Charlotte's fourth abortion clinic and the newest among more than a dozen in the state. According to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights, only two Southern states — Florida and Georgia — have more abortion clinics than North Carolina.

The new clinic opens amid a national wave of new abortion restrictions.

This year Alabama lawmakers passed a law widely regarded as the nation's most restrictive abortion bans. It gives no exceptions for victims of rape or incest. A new Georgia law effectively bans abortion when doctors detect a fetal heartbeat, usually after six weeks of pregnancy. Missouri's governor [signed a bill last month](#) that would ban abortion after eight weeks, according to news reports.

Planned Parenthood [sued that state](#) after state health officials did not renew the license of their St. Louis clinic, the only one in the state, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. [After hearing arguments](#) Tuesday, a judge delayed a decision.

Jenny Black, CEO and president at Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, said supporters believe the new Charlotte clinic makes a statement.

“It's an all-out assault on women's ability to access their reproductive autonomy,” she said Tuesday. “It was really important to . . . our community supporters here in Charlotte that we draw a line in the sand.”



Preparations are made in front of the new Planned Parenthood facility in Charlotte prior to a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday, June 4, 2019. David T. Foster III DTFOSTER@CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM

‘CHIPPING AWAY’ AT ROE

The Hill newspaper reported that [more than half](#) the states in America have passed or considered new laws on abortion this year, most restricting it but some moving to protect abortion rights.

On Wednesday, the N.C. House is expected to try to override Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of a bill that would punish doctors who kill a newborn who survives an abortion attempt. Cooper called it “needless legislation” and “unnecessary interference” between a woman and her doctor.

Anti-abortion activists plan to keep fighting in North Carolina.

“Planned Parenthood opening an abortion facility fits with their business model to do as many abortions as they can,” Barbara Holt, president of N.C. Right to Life, said in a statement. “They are always looking for ways to increase their abortion business around which their other services revolve. Since more abortions are done in Charlotte than any other city in the state, it is a natural fit for them.”

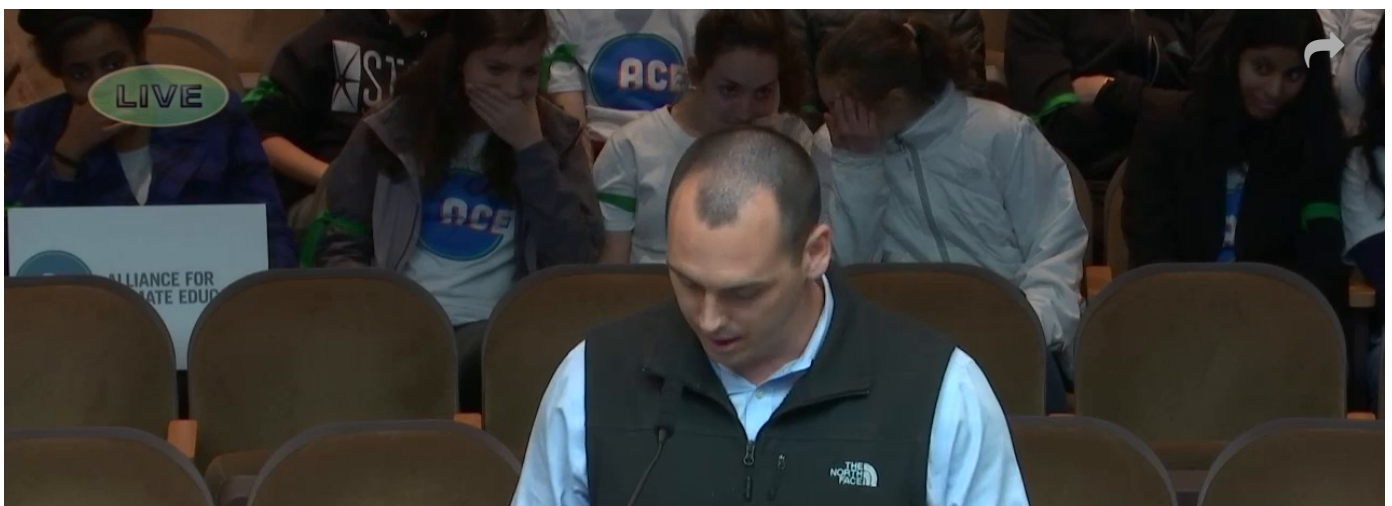
Abortion opponents hope the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 ruling that legalized abortion. Wen said there are now 15 cases that could prompt the court to reconsider that ruling.

“If any of them are taken up, *Roe* could be further eroded and chipped away or overturned,” she said.

“Many people in America do not believe it’s under threat. But I hope they see what’s happened in Missouri and also the extreme laws being passed around the country. . . . And we know that banning abortion is not going to stop abortion but it will stop safe legal abortions.



A west Raleigh women’s health clinic served as the backdrop for a rally to support women’s reproductive rights Tuesday. It was one of more than 500 planned across the country as a response to recent state laws that restrict abortions BY **TRAVIS LONG** ✉





Anti-abortion speakers attended Raleigh's April 2 city council meeting and plan to speak during the May 7 meeting. They asked for city leaders to create a sanctuary city for the unborn. BY CITY OF RALEIGH

PROTESTS LIKELY

Advocates say Planned Parenthood offers much more than abortions, including access to birth control, community outreach, comprehensive sex education programs and eventually primary medical care. In 2017 abortion accounted for less than 4% of the group's services, [according to the Washington Post](#).

“This facility should represent an expression of our commitment to meeting the unmet health needs in Charlotte,” said Black. “For many women reproductive health care is the only health care they get. They come in with other needs and we would like to be able to meet as many needs as possible.”

Wen called states like North Carolina a “critical backstop” for abortion rights.

Tara Romano, exec director of NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina, said the state's abortion clinics are located in a handful of cities, leaving many women far from services.

“North Carolina is still a challenging place for abortion access,” she said. “It is fortunate that there are clinics but they're clustered . . . So I do think it can be challenge for people to access abortion.”

Along with brightly painted walls and new equipment in its exam rooms, Planned Parenthood's new clinic features a high-tech security system.

In Charlotte, protests are a regular occurrence at A Preferred Women's Health Center, an independent abortion clinic on Latrobe Drive. Protesters have used an amplified public address system as they blare sermons and music or shout at patients entering the center. At least partly in response, the city council is considering a noise ordinance that would create a 200-foot buffer around such facilities. Anti-abortion activists believe it is aimed at them.

Some protesters [took their concerns](#) to the council Monday night. A vote on the proposed ordinance is June 24.

“The North Carolina Values Coalition is not surprised to see Planned Parenthood expanding their abortion services into Charlotte,” said Jim Quick, the coalition’s Grassroots Director. “(L)ook at how the Democratic majority on Charlotte City Council this month is creating new buffers to silence pro-life organizations.”



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