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Delaware reprimands and fines abortion doctor



Abortion opponents stand outside Planned Parenthood's Wilmington office. (Mark Eichmann/WHYY)



BY NICHELLE POLSTON

A former Planned Parenthood of Delaware abortion doctor will never be able to work in the state again. The verdict comes after months of complaints and investigations into the Planned Parenthood clinic in Wilmington.

On Tuesday, the Delaware Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline approved a consent agreement Dr. Timothy Liveright worked out with the state Attorney General in November.

In addition to the doctor who's prohibited from working in Delaware, the state issued a reprimand letter and a \$1,500 fine. In the agreement Dr. Liveright admits to engaging in conduct that was "unprofessional, disrespectful and inappropriate."

Two former nurses, Jayne Mitchell-Werbrich and Joyce Vasikonis who spearheaded investigations are not happy with the way the Delaware Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline or Attorney General's office handled Dr. Timothy Liveright. A disappointed Vasikonis says the ruling sends the wrong message.

"What this has said to nurses across the state is (something like) don't follow the law, don't do what you are supposed to because they are not going to stand behind you and do their job....you are out there on your own," said Vasikonis who says by law every nurse in the state is required to report medical concerns.

Sen. Greg Lavelle, R-Sharples, who brought the testimony of Vasikonis and Werbrich to a legislative committee hearing both in Dover and later at Wilmington's Chase Center in July, also shared his thoughts on Tuesday's ruling.

"A 'letter' and small fine is the penalty for these serious and significant violations of medical standards and patient care by a medical professional licensed by the state of Delaware? It seems like the penalty given for a traffic violation and not for somebody whom the state called a 'clear and immediate danger to the public,' and whose actions and lack of action resulted in Planned Parenthood shuttering its procedures for at least a month," said Lavelle.

According to Werbrich, the Department of Justice assured her not long ago that it would go after Planned Parenthood's former medical director Dr. Carole Meyers who oversaw Dr. Liveright as well but after Tuesday's verdict, Werbrich doesn't believe that will happen.

"My next goal is to now find out what's going to happen with Carole Meyers, let us not forget about Carole Meyers, she also has ownership in this," said Werbrich.

Planned Parenthood of Delaware clinics stopped performing abortions in April and May of 2013 but in an interview with First reporters, CEO Ruth Lytle Barnaby said the move had nothing to do with complaints or investigations.

"We suspended them for about two months during a time period when we were bringing on new registered nurses and we wanted to make sure that those registered nurses were highly trained, qualified and ready to provide that care," said Barnaby.

"Planned Parenthood fed a monster and continued to feed a monster and if I had never said anything, Dr. Liveright would be practicing today," said Werbrich.

Last year, the Delaware facility was fined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Liveright lives in Pennsylvania, but has not been practicing at any of the Planned Parenthood facilities in that state. He also worked in New Jersey, but let his license there expire.

First will look at the situation at Planned Parenthood and hear comments from their new administrator this Friday at 5:30 and 11pm on WHYY-TV.

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