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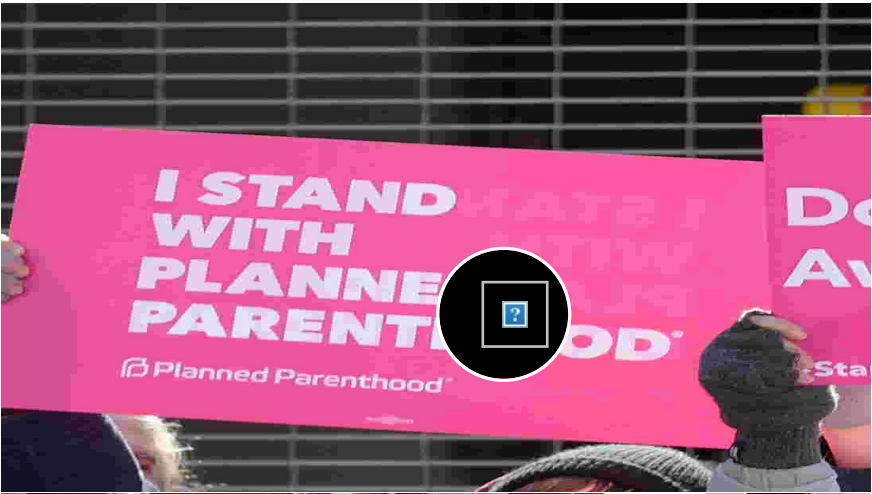


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Planned Parenthood opens new health center in south Fort Myers

Liz Freeman, Fort Myers News-Press Published 3:47 p.m. ET Jan. 27, 2020 | Updated 1:27 p.m. ET Jan. 29, 2020



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Patients of Planned Parenthood have a new health center that opened Monday in Lee County.

The new \$2 million center at 6418 Commerce Drive in south Fort Myers is nearly double the size of Planned Parenthood's longstanding location at 8595 College Parkway. The old location has closed.

The new location should handle patient volume growth for the next decade, said Stephanie Fraim, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central

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Florida.

“We have been growing by 7% to 9% over the last three years,” she said.

Young people are increasingly turning to Planned Parenthood for the services it provides and for confidentiality, she said.



Planned Parenthood’s new location at 6418 Commerce Park Drive in Fort Myers. The center opened Jan. 27, 2020. (Photo: Submitted)

The 4,817-square-foot building for the new health center was donated by an anonymous supporter in December 2018, she said. Planned Parenthood spent \$2 million to finish the interior, which was funded by donors and other supporters.

“I’m so thrilled that Planned Parenthood was able to expand into their larger facility,” Karen Nathan, a community supporter and advocate, said in a press release. “Planned Parenthood is an integral part of the healthcare community in Southwest Florida.”

The former Planned Parenthood location in Lee served more than 4,400 patients in 2018, the latest that full-year data was available.

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The additional space in the new complex allows for four more staff positions from the current 15 to 16 employees, and provides more space for patient care services, Fraim said.



Planned Parenthood, 6418 Commerce Park Drive, Fort Myers, Florida (Photo: Submitted)

Planned Parenthood provides a range of services from well-person examinations to cancer screening and care for sexually transmitted diseases. The organization provides gynecological services that include breast health and mammogram referrals, birth control and emergency contraception, pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, abortion services, vasectomies and transgender care.

Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida operates in 22 counties with 10 health centers and serves more than 42,000 patients. One of the 10 locations is in Naples at 1425 Creech Blvd.

“The Collier building is large enough to accommodate any volume growth in that county,” Fraim said.



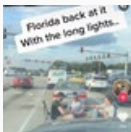
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The annual budget for Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida is \$20 million, with donors providing about one-third of the budget, she said.

Planned Parenthood operates like other medical organizations and collects fees and insurance reimbursement for services, including from Medicaid.

Abortion opponents who used to regularly demonstrate outside the old Planned Parenthood center showed up Monday morning at the new location.

Less than 20% of services are for abortions in Lee, according to the nonprofit organization.

Currently, the Fort Myers location provides abortion services one day a week, which could expand to two days a week as demand increases, Fraim said.

The Florida Legislature is considering legislation that would require health care providers to get a notarized consent form from a parent or guardian before providing an abortion to a minor. The measure, Senate Bill 404, passed its final Senate committee last week.

More: [Florida Senate panel approves parental consent for abortion](#)

Fraim said the legislation is medically unnecessary because Florida already requires parental notification, which was adopted in 2019.

"This is just a punitive next step," Fraim said, adding that national studies show 7 out of 10 young people seek advice or help from a parent or guardian in order to access an abortion.

This week in Tallahassee, the Interfaith Coalition for Reproductive Health and Justice and Catholics for Choice are scheduled to speak out in opposition to the Senate bill.

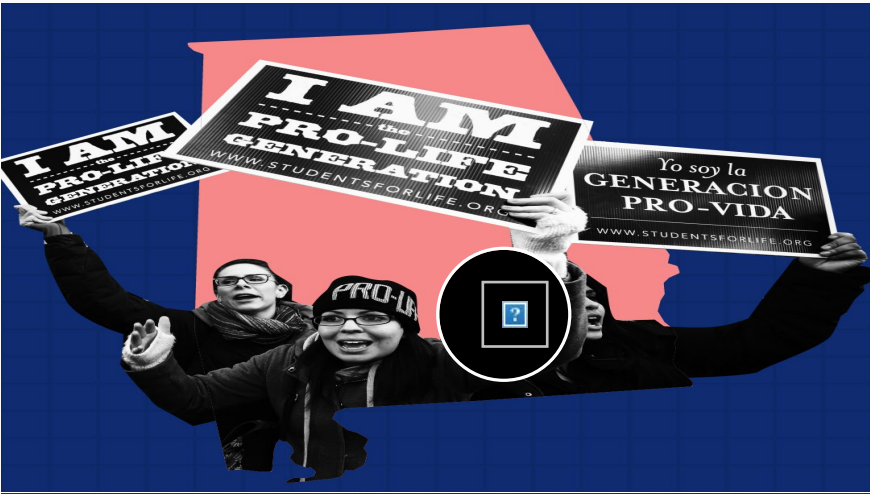
State Sen. Dennis Baxley, a Republican from Ocala who is co-sponsoring the legislation, said during a recent interview with Florida Health News that notification, as required now under Florida law, is not consent.

"So, I think it's very important that we get parents back involved in the decision-making process, not only as a matter of parental rights but parental responsibility, whether you are pro-life or pro-choice," Baxley said.

The organization began offering transgender care in 2016, which accounted for 2,640 patient visits in 2019, or 4% of all services that year.

Kasey Fraize, a transgender patient and senior at Florida Gulf Coast University, said Planned Parenthood has been valuable to his needs.

“Without them I would not have access to hormone replacement therapy due to a lack of service providers and cost barriers with insurance,” he said in a news release. “The work that Planned Parenthood does is important for people of all genders, and I’m passionate about the work they provide the transgender community.”



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