



# Center for Choice closes after UT dropped pact

Kasich won't say if he'd veto law prohibiting hospitals from engaging in transfer agreements



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The Blade

JUN 11, 2013

8:58 AM

The parking lot of the Center for Choice in downtown Toledo was nearly deserted and the lights in the building were dark on Monday, four days after the long-running abortion clinic quietly shut its doors.

At the same time in Bowling Green, Gov. John Kasich refused to say whether he would veto a law prohibiting publicly funded hospitals — such as the University of Toledo Medical Center — from engaging in transfer agreements with abortion clinics





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ambulatory surgical facilities to have a written transfer agreement with a local hospital, and of local hospitals refusing to provide that agreement.

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Sue Postal, Center for Choice owner and director, confirmed that the clinic stopped taking appointments last week.

“The three hospitals in the area are unwilling to support us. It really needs to be a bigger community support. I don’t want to blame anybody. We’ve never asked for much. We’ve kind of absorbed most of the abuse,” Ms. Postal said. “I don’t want anybody to be the scapegoat because I think it’s a community thing.”

Ms. Postal said the facility fought for many years to stay open, even though it has been subject to firebombings and protesters chaining themselves to the building. She said multiple restrictions have made it difficult for women to obtain services at the facility.

“We’ve been fighting the fight for all these years,” she said. “When anything’s attacked, you need community support. We tried.”

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Ohio Director of Health Theodore Wymyslo notified the facility on April 24 that it had 30 days to request a hearing on a proposal to revoke the clinic's license. Ms. Postal said she would have needed a transfer agreement in place to get a hearing.

Center for Choice, 328 22nd St., has been open since 1983 and has served patients from Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana.

Ambulatory surgical facilities, including abortion clinics, must have a transfer agreement with a hospital that will accept patients with complications, according to state health department regulations.

Center for Choice previously had a transfer agreement with ProMedica, although a transfer agreement has not been in place since 2010. All three local hospital systems, including ProMedica, Mercy, and UTMC, have declined to sign a transfer agreement with the facility.

On April 4, University of Toledo President Lloyd Jacobs said he was withdrawing negotiations for a transfer agreement with the facility. Dr. Jacobs later said he canceled the negotiations to keep the university neutral on a controversial issue.

He emphasized that UTMC, the former Medical College of Ohio, would continue to provide emergency medical treatment to any patients who need it.





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his action would force the Center for Choice and Toledo's other abortion clinic, Capital Care Network, out of business. UTMC used Center for Choice for its medical residents as part of the hospital's obstetrics and gynecology accreditation.

Capital Care Network will lose its transfer agreement with UTMC after July 31.

Carol Dunn, former owner of the Center for Choice, said the center always has been a target.

"We've been through a whole heck of a lot over 29 years," she said. "There's always been something ongoing as far as picketers and harassment, and it's just been a continuum."

While in Bowling Green, Mr. Kasich on Monday declined to say whether he would use his line-item-veto power to remove a provision in the state Senate version of the two-year budget that would prohibit state-funded hospitals, such as UTMC, from entering into such agreements.

"First of all, I'm pro-life," Mr. Kasich said to UTMC medical student Avneet Singh who raised the issue during a question-and-answer session with the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce on the campus of Bowling Green State University.

"We'll have to see how this proceeds through the House and the Senate conference committee and have just got to wait and see how it goes, then I'll make a decision as to whether I think it goes too far or doesn't, but keep in mind that I'm pro-life," Mr. Kasich said, changing the subject to the rising costs of higher education.

A House-Senate conference committee is expected to meet this week to work out a compromise version on the budget and decide whether to keep the provision.

"Hopefully things happen to change within the conference



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State Rep. Tim Brown (R., Bowling Green) disagreed with using the budget to push the issue.

“I believe these bigger items need to be dealt with outside the budget process. I too am pro-life, but when there are consequences that there isn’t proper time to evaluate, having them in these omnibus bills does a disservice to the process.”

About 125 people attended the governor’s chamber of commerce speech, which focused largely on what he said is his mission to grow the state economically by keeping taxes low and lowering regulatory barriers. He said he wants to re-energize career and technical education in Ohio.

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*First Published June 10, 2013, 10:54pm*

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