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The Abortion Clinics That Managed To Stay Open In Texas Now Have Huge Patient Loads

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TWO SIGNS AT A RALLY IN DALLAS WHERE A GROUP OF NEARLY 200 GATHERED TO PROTEST THE APPROVAL OF NEW ABORTION RESTRICTIONS IN TEXAS CREDIT: AP PHOTO/TONY GUTIERREZ

At the beginning of November, tough new abortion restrictions took effect in Texas, forcing multiple clinics across the state to immediately halt their services. That's created an entirely new reproductive health landscape in Texas, leaving the remaining clinics to absorb an increased patient load.

Coastal Birth Control Center, located in Corpus Christi, is one of those clinics. It's the only clinic left on Texas' Coastal Bend, the strip of land running along the state's eastern border. Now that several clinics have been shuttered in the Rio Grande Valley—a rural area of the state that borders Mexico—the women in that community must travel to Corpus Christi for reproductive care.

Dr. Eduardo Aquino, who operates the Coastal Birth Control Center, says that the number of patients coming to his clinic from the Rio Grande Valley has tripled. That's created a backlog, so the women who live near Corpus Christi are now traveling to San Antonio to avoid the long wait.

Aquino moved to San Antonio more than a decade ago, leaving the Birth Control Center's Corpus Christi location in the hands of a different doctor. But now, he's one of the shrinking numbers of doctors in the state who's able to keep practicing, so he's traveling in between the two cities to provide care to both communities. "My life has changed completely," he told the Corpus Christi Caller-Times. "I keep on doing it, not because I need to, but because I think somebody has to give service here in this area."

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Under Texas' new law, abortion doctors must have admitting privileges with local hospitals, an unnecessary requirement that's often impossible for doctors to meet. Aquino is one of the providers who's been able to obtain privileges. Even so, that doesn't mean the Corpus Christi clinic will necessarily be able to remain open.

A different part of Texas' law mandates that abortion clinics must meet the same standards as ambulatory surgical centers, which means they must make expensive upgrades to their buildings. That provision will go into effect in September. Coastal Birth Control Center doesn't meet those new standards, so Aquino needs to tear it down and

build a new clinic, an undertaking he believes will cost him \$1.5 million. He's looking for a partner so he can afford to do the renovations and keep the clinic open. He [told the Corpus Christi Caller-Times](#) that he hasn't yet been able to find a doctor who's interested. Even if he does, they might not be able to get admitting privileges.

If Aquino is unsuccessful and the clinic is forced to close, there won't be any clinics left in Corpus Christi. The only abortion providers in South Texas would be located in San Antonio—which means that some women would be forced to travel up to 300 miles to get to the nearest clinic.

As the debate over Texas' new abortion regulations has raged on for months, the anti-choice community claims that the new rules are simply common-sense updates to ensure that women are receiving safe care. But the [Dallas Observer recently reported](#) that abortion is now regulated much more stringently than other common medical procedures in the state, including colonoscopies, vasectomies, wisdom teeth extraction, laser eye surgery, and appendectomies.

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