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Texas Group to Open Abortion Clinic in New Mexico

Published September 4, 2014 • Updated on September 4, 2014 at 3:54 pm



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A Texas company announced Wednesday that it's opening an abortion clinic in southern New Mexico to help increase access near West Texas amid a restrictive new law.

Whole Women's Health confirmed that it's opening a clinic in the Las Cruces area on Sept. 15, but declined to give details on the exact location, the *Las Cruces Sun-News* reported.

The clinic would be the second in Dona Ana County to provide abortion services; Hill Top Women's Reproductive Clinic operates in Santa Teresa. The new clinic also would boost abortion care around Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

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Hill Top also operates a clinic in El Paso that remains open for now.

A federal judge on Friday ruled against a Texas law requiring clinics in the state to maintain hospital-level operating standards, a requirement that had shuttered many centers. The judge also exempted clinics in El Paso and McAllen from a requirement that doctors who perform abortions hold admitting privileges at a nearby hospital.

Because of the new Texas law, Whole Woman's Health was forced to close its Austin clinic earlier this year but will continue to operate its other Texas offices, which includes McAllen, in light of the federal ruling, the company said.

Whole Women's Health said it will offer abortion procedures for up to 18 weeks of pregnancy at the planned southern New Mexico site and will accept state Medicaid.

Whole Women's Health locations also provide other gynecological services, including pregnancy tests, birth control counseling, testing for sexually transmitted infections, and treatment for abnormal pap smears and yeast infections.

Multiple abortion rights advocates in New Mexico applauded the announcement.

"We have long seen the need for comprehensive reproductive health care services in many communities throughout New Mexico, and we enthusiastically applaud Whole Woman's Health for opening a clinic in Las Cruces that addresses a significant gap in women's access to reproductive (health care) in that region," Pamelya Herndon, executive director of the Southwest Women's Law Center in Albuquerque, said in an emailed statement.

State Rep. Doreen Gallegos, D-Mesilla Park, said she hoped the clinic would not just look to "make a buck" by skirting Texas' strict regulations.

"I want to make sure that women have access to reproductive health and education," she said.

Bishop Oscar Cantu of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces said he will put together a study group to see how the clinic "affects the community and how to respond to that new presence in our community."

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