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# THE CATHOLIC WORLD REPORT

## With medical supplies limited, Ohio abortion clinics face cease and desist orders

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Columbus, Ohio, Mar 24, 2020 / 05:00 pm ([CNA](#)).- Amid efforts to conserve medical supplies for the response to the new coronavirus, Ohio's health department has asked the state attorney general to issue a cease and desist order to Preterm, a Cleveland-based abortion clinic that continues to perform elective abortions despite statewide orders against elective surgeries.

Melanie Amato, press secretary of the Ohio Department of Health, told the Daily Caller News Foundation March 23 that the health department "has been made aware of allegations that some health care providers appear to have violated the order on performing non-elective procedures."

When the state health department learns of allegations of non-compliance, it is asking the Ohio Attorney General's Office to issue cease and desist orders, she said.

"These orders have started going out," said Amato. "This is now an enforcement issue."

The Ohio Department of Health's March 17 order canceled "all non-essential or elective surgeries" that use personal protective equipment by 5 p.m. March 18. The move is intended to conserve resources for health care workers as victims of new coronavirus are expected to fill hospital beds.

The Ohio Attorney General's Office previously sent out letters to non-compliant facilities that have been subjects of complaints to the health department. Ohio authorities have said abortion clinics were only some of the surgical clinics that received letters.

Abortion clinics that received letters included Planned Parenthood Ohio Southwest Region, Women's Med Center in Dayton and the Preterm facility in Cleveland.

Despite the statements from Ohio authorities, Preterm plans to continue to provide "the full range of abortion care services because it is essential healthcare," Preterm executive director Chrissy France told the Daily Caller News Foundation Monday morning.

"In compliance with the order from the Ohio Department of Health, our physicians will be making individualized determinations to ensure each person gets the healthcare they need and that all healthcare providers across the state have access to the supplies needed during this pandemic," France said.

Iris Harvey and Kersha Deibel, the respective presidents and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio and Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region, have claimed that Planned Parenthood can still continue to provide "essential services, including abortion."

Ohio Deputy Attorney General Jonathan Fulkerson sent a March 20 letter to Planned Parenthood of Southwest Ohio's Cincinnati surgery center saying that the health department order was driven by the need to preserve personal protective equipment "for health care providers who are battling the COVID-19 pandemic that is spreading in our state" and to "preserve critical hospital capacity and resources."

"This is an unprecedented time in the state's history and everyone must do their part to help stop the spread of this disease," Fulkerson said.

"If you or your facility do not immediately stop performing non-essential or elective surgical elective abortions in compliance with the attached order, the Department of Health will take all appropriate measures," he continued.

Bethany McCorkle, a spokeswoman for the office of Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, told CNN that abortion providers are among one of many to receive such a letter.

"This is not an abortion issue," McCorkle said. "A letter was also sent to a urology group that was allegedly performing elective surgeries."

A March 18 joint statement from eight medical groups including the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists, which tends to take pro-abortion rights stands, asserted that abortion is "an essential component of comprehensive health care."

The groups argued that abortion is "a time-sensitive service for which a delay of several weeks, or in some cases days, may increase the risks or potentially make it completely inaccessible." Not being able to obtain an abortion has consequences that "profoundly impact a person's life, health, and well-being."

Ohio Right to Life had previously written Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio to complain about what it said was a violation of the order.

“As countless other clinics across the state comply with this health order and prioritize the lives of their fellow Ohioans, Planned Parenthood continues to put profit and abortion above the safety of our society’s most vulnerable members—children and the elderly,” Ohio Right to Life president Michael Gonidakis said March 21.

In Texas, Attorney General Ken Paxton said Gov. Greg Abbott's statewide order barring non-essential surgeries, issued on Sunday, applied to abortion clinics.

“We must work together as Texans to stop the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that our health care professionals and facilities have all the resources they need to fight the virus at this time,” said Paxton. “No one is exempt from the governor’s executive order on medically unnecessary surgeries and procedures, including abortion providers.”

Failure to comply with the Texas executive order could mean fines of up to \$1,000 or 180 days in jail.

Jonathan Saenz, president and attorney for the group Texas Values, welcomed the decision.

“Abortion is not essential healthcare,” he said March 23. “At a time when so many lives are at risk, we should all be able to agree that efforts to protect people from the coronavirus should be more important than the taking of a human life through abortion.”

Tara Pohlmeier, communications manager with the pro-abortion rights group Progress Texas, criticized the action.

“Instead of trying to distract with ideology, state lawmakers should focus on prioritizing public health and safety measures,” she said, according to the New York Times.

On March 24, the Catholic Medical Association, along with several other medical groups, issued statement explaining that abortion “generates more patients to be seen in already overburdened emergency rooms. Most abortion providers instruct women to go to an emergency room if they have any concerning symptoms after the abortion. Approximately 5% of women who undergo medication abortions will require evaluation in an emergency room, most commonly for hemorrhage. Surgical abortions can also result in hemorrhage. Emergency room personnel – who are already struggling to meet the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic – will be further strained to provide care to these women”.

In Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Washington state, where pro-abortion rights support is strong, officials have said that orders halting elective surgeries do not apply to abortions.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan has suspended non-essential business and elective medical procedures but did not clarify whether this included an elective abortions. The state of Louisiana has ordered a delay in non-essential medical procedures but it is also unclear whether elective abortions are included.

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