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HEALTH

# Orlando abortion clinic faces \$193K fine for allegedly violating Florida law, fears bankruptcy

By Caroline Catherman  
Orlando Sentinel • Sep 12, 2022 at 4:50 pm



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clinic for a consultation, then make an additional appointment at least 24 hours later to actually get the procedure. Of 217 visits, 193 showed the procedure was performed on the same day of the initial clinic and physician visit; therefore, not meeting the 24-hour wait time. The clinic argues they didn't know the law had taken effect. They say they contacted AHCA many times and AHCA never told them when the law would go into effect. (High-dynamic-range composite image by Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda/ Orlando Sentinel) (Orlando Sentinel)

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The Center of Orlando for Women is fighting a \$193,000 fine from the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration after the Orlando abortion clinic was found to have reportedly performed abortions without following a law that requires a 24-hour waiting period.

The law, passed in 2015, was tied up in court until April 25, when a Leon County circuit judge upheld it. It requires people seeking abortions to come in-person to a clinic to receive information, then make an additional appointment at least 24 hours later to get the procedure.

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**STATE OF FLORIDA  
AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION**

STATE OF FLORIDA, AGENCY FOR  
HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION,

Petitioner,

v.

AHCA No. 2022007752

CENTER OF ORLANDO FOR WOMEN,  
L.L.C. d/b/a CENTER OF ORLANDO FOR  
WOMEN,

Respondent.

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT**

The Petitioner, State of Florida, Agency for Health Care Administration (“the Agency”), files this Administrative Complaint against the Respondent, Center of Orlando for Women, L.L.C. d/b/a Center of Orlando for Women (“the Clinic”), pursuant to Sections 120.569 and 120.57, Florida Statutes.

**NATURE OF THE ACTION**

The Petitioner files this Administrative Complaint against an abortion clinic to impose an administrative fine

The state of Florida fines Orlando Women's Center \$193,000 for allegedly performing abortions without adhering to a waiting period of 24 hours between consult and the procedure.

The Florida Agency for Health Care Administration determined during a survey that from April 26 to May 11, the clinic had 217 patients come in seeking abortions. Of those patients, 193 had the procedure performed the same day as their initial visit, and AHCA is charging \$1,000 per violation.

A response filed July 29 by the clinic’s attorney, Julie Gallagher, says the fine “would likely bankrupt [the clinic] and put it out of business.”

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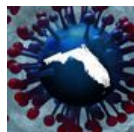
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The Orlando Women's Center, on Monday, September 12, 2022. (Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda/ Orlando Sentinel) (Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda/Orlando Sentinel)

According to 2021 [Florida Agency for Health Care Administration data](#), the Center of Orlando for Women — which treats patients under the name of the Orlando Women’s Center — is one of two clinics in Orange County licensed to perform first- and second-trimester abortions and one of five in Central Florida.



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The clinic is fighting the proposed fine in the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings, where clinic leaders argue they were not told the law was in effect when they broke it.

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“Respondent had heard of the ruling that allowed the 24-hour waiting period to go into effect but could not locate any information about the effective date of the new requirement which mandated a significant change in how abortions are provided in Florida,” the petition reads.

The clinic’s response alleges it contacted the state agency in April and May and was repeatedly told, by multiple people, that AHCA could not give them an effective date or share any information about the law. The clinic was told to check AHCA’s website for updates, Gallagher said.

Gallagher argues ACHA shouldn’t be trying to impose the maximum penalty, \$1,000 per violation, and should instead fine clinics at a lower amount.

“They’ve got a lot of cases pending where they’re trying to impose large fines. And in our case, we say that there’s no way the fine should be as much as it [is] because the client didn’t know, and the client was trying — daily, almost — to find out from ACHA when the new law was going into effect and could never get any information,” Gallagher said.

Two other cases against Miami-Dade County abortion clinics have been filed in recent weeks, according to [the News Service of Florida](#). Those cases also allege violations of the 24-hour waiting period law, but at much smaller scales. One clinic, A GYN Diagnostic Center, is fighting a \$41,000 fine while another, Doctor’s Office for Women, is fighting a \$3,000 fine.

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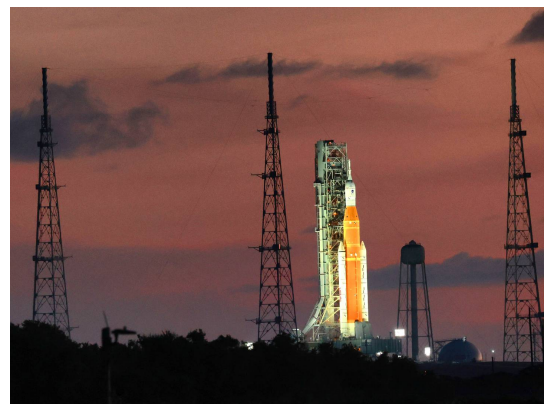
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