

Alabama House Passes Bill Tightening Restrictions on Abortion Clinics

The Alabama House of Representatives passed legislation on Tuesday that would tighten regulations for abortion clinics in a move critics say could force many in the state to close.

The Republican-controlled House approved the bill in a 73-23 vote. The bill now moves to the Senate, which also has a Republican majority, for consideration.

The bill, called The Women's Health and Safety Act, would mandate that an Alabama-licensed physician be present at every abortion and those doctors would be required to have admitting privileges at local hospitals.

In Mississippi, the state's lone abortion clinic has filed a lawsuit to halt a new state law similar to the bill passed in Alabama, arguing it is unconstitutional and saying it will eventually lead to its closure.

Supporters of the Alabama bill say it is intended to make abortion clinics meet the same standards as hospitals and would ensure the safety of women who choose to have abortions.

A proposed amendment that would have prohibited hospitals from denying admitting privileges to abortion doctors solely because they performed the procedures was voted down by lawmakers.

Under current law, abortion clinics partner with local doctors who have hospital admitting privileges to provide follow-up care.

"This truly is a women's rights bill," state Representative Mary Sue McClurkin, a Republican who sponsored the

legislation, said in a statement. "It protects the right of a woman having an abortion to have it in a safe and healthy environment.

However, some Democrats said they worry it could eventually force the closure of abortion clinics.

"At the end of the day, we need to make sure we are not imposing some type of restriction on abortion that would put a woman's right to choose in jeopardy," Representative Juandalynn Givan told TV channel WSFA.

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