

Texas Pro-Life Law Shuts Down 13 Abortion Clinics

Two more Texas abortion providers said they will shut down this week, saying their doctors were unable to get admitting privileges to nearby hospitals as required under new restrictions enacted by the state last year.

Proponents of new regulations say they were designed to protect women's health. Women's rights groups have complained that they were designed to put abortion clinics out of business and have already succeeded in eliminating a third of them. Women in parts of Texas now must drive for hours to reach a clinic.

Whole Women's Health will close two of its five clinics in the state, shutting facilities in McAllen and Beaumont because they cannot meet the new regulations, including one that a physician have admitting privileges at an appropriately equipped hospital within 30 miles.

The reduction will cut the number of abortion providers in the state to 19 from 32 before the restrictions went in place, according to the group and state data.

"After serving women in these communities for over 10 years, Texas politicians have forced us to shut our doors," Whole Women's Health said in a statement.

Admitting privileges allow doctors to admit patients to a hospital for treatment. The privileges are usually given to doctors who are on staff at the hospital.

The Texas Hospital Association, which represents more the 400 hospitals, called the restrictions burdensome and unnecessary because women experiencing abortion complications can go to a hospital emergency room and be treated.

Opponents argue that, given that Texas has vast areas with sparse population, the admitting privileges requirement places an unjust burden on clinics and punishes people in rural parts of the state where medical care can be scarce.

Backers of the regulations argue the measures put in place necessary safeguards aimed to improving public health.

“We are pleased that women will never again receive substandard care from either of these abortion facilities,” Joe Pojman, director of the anti-abortion group Texas Alliance for Life, said of the closures.

More U.S. states have passed sweeping abortion restrictions in the last two years than in the previous decade, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports the right to abortion but whose research is cited by both sides in the debate.

The Oklahoma House of Representatives last week passed a bill with an admitting privileges requirement almost identical to the one in Texas.

In September, the remaining abortion providers in Texas face an expensive hurdle when another rule takes effect that imposes surgical center standards for clinics, even those that perform nonsurgical medication abortions.

Whole Women’s Health founder Amy Hagstrom Miller said this will force more clinics to shut down because of the enormous sums of money needed to make the changes.

“There’s a lot of us facing closures in September unless we can figure out something else,” she said.

Planned Parenthood has said the requirement could leave the state of 26 million people with as few as six abortion centers.

Federal courts have so far upheld the Texas law but opponents

have filed appeals seeking to ease some of its restrictions.

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