

This Is a Big Loss for the Pro-Life Movement

The California State Assembly approved a bill on Tuesday that would require licensed pregnancy centers, which sometimes steer women away from abortion, to inform clients about state programs offering such services, officials said.

The Democratic-led Assembly voted 49-26 to approve the bill, which has the support of California's Democratic attorney general, Kamala Harris, and will next go to the state Senate, said Allison Ruff, aide to Assemblywoman Autumn Burke, a Democrat and co-author of the bill.

With the vote, lawmakers in liberal-leaning California are moving in the opposite direction of a number of more conservative states, where laws have placed increased obligations on abortion providers.

Eleven states, but not California, require in-person counseling and a waiting period before an abortion can take place, according to the Guttmacher Institute, which tracks reproductive policy.

The California bill would require pregnancy centers that are licensed as clinics to notify patients that the state has programs that offer free or affordable abortion services, as well as help with family planning and prenatal care, according to Burke's office.

Pregnancy centers that are not licensed as clinics would be spared from having to give notice to clients of state programs, but would be required to disclose they are not licensed medical providers.

California has about 200 so-called crisis pregnancy centers, which may be licensed as clinics or unlicensed. All generally

steer women away from abortion, Ruff said.

“That is their focus and they have every right to focus on adoption and other services, but they also can’t misinform,” Ruff said.

Sandra Palacios, associate director for governmental relations for the California Catholic Conference, which opposes the bill, said her organization would support an effort to fight the legislation in court if it is enacted.

“If I walk into a pro-life center, then I’m trying to figure out what can I do to get some medical help to make sure that my baby is safe and healthy,” she said.

“It’s almost like saying that I’m walking into McDonald’s but they’re supposed to put up a notice that says across the street a Burger King or something better is offered.”

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