

Report: State oversight lax at abortion providers

Detroit Free Press - Detroit, Mich.
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Date: Mar 16, 2012
Start Page: A.4
Section: Metro
Text Word Count: 306

Document Text

Free Press Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- Abortion providers operate with minimal or no state oversight in Michigan, resulting in widespread violation of requirements for ensuring patient safety, the disposal of medical waste and patient privacy, according to a report by Right to Life of Michigan presented Thursday to a state Senate subcommittee.

Only four of 32 surgical abortion facilities in the state are currently licensed, Right to Life's legislative director Ed Rivet told the subcommittee. That lack of oversight results in widespread unsanitary conditions and serial violations of reporting requirements, Rivet said.

In at least two instances in the last 10 years, the death of Michigan patients from abortion complications were not reported to the state, according to Right to Life, the state's leading anti-abortion lobby.

"When complaints are filed ... problems go uninvestigated," Rivet said, adding that some of the clinics "should have been shut down a long time ago."

The director of the Bureau of Health Systems, which is responsible for the licensing and inspection of abortion clinics and a variety of other medical and psychiatric facilities, conceded the state provides relatively lax oversight. But many of the shortcomings pointed out in the report stem from the fact that so few clinics are licensed, said Director Mike Pemble. His agency doesn't have the authority to inspect an unlicensed facility, Pemble said.

But inspections even at the licensed facilities are infrequent, he acknowledged, because of limited manpower. Pemble said the licensing fees paid by the clinics are inadequate to support even a single full-time inspector.

State Sen. Mark Jansen, R-Grand Rapids, chairman of the subcommittee, said he plans further inquiry and may request more funding, at least temporarily, to bring clinic inspections up to speed. To read the full Right to Life report, go to http://media.rtl.org/pdf/legislation/Abortion_Clinic_Abuses_March_2012.pdf.

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ID_Code: C4-203160366

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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