
IN GOOD CONSCIENCE

Virginia Department of Health
Virginia State Board of Health
9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 300
Henrico, VA 23233

Chairman, Madam Vice Chair, and members of the Board,

My name is Kate Parke. I am here on behalf of Catholics for Choice, an organization that believes every woman has the right to follow her own conscience on reproductive health matters. I respectfully submit testimony today regarding the Virginia State Board of Health's Regulations for Licensure of Abortion Facilities [12 VAC 5-412].

As a Catholic, a resident of Virginia and a woman who regularly seeks health services in the Commonwealth, I am here in strong support of, and appreciation for, the Virginia Board of Health's decision to reconsider the medically unnecessary restrictions that currently affect women's healthcare centers in Virginia. This summer, the Supreme Court affirmed in the *Whole Woman's Health* decision that these restrictions create undue burdens for women seeking abortion care. I applaud this board for taking steps to remove those burdens.

I stand with the majority of more than 690,000 Catholics in Virginia in support of public policies that respect the ability of women to make moral decisions about their own lives. The role of the individual conscience in matters of moral decision-making is at the core of the Catholic tradition. Catholics support policies that enable women to make decisions about whether and when to have children, and therefore, support affordable and safe access to the full range of reproductive health services, including abortion.

The Catholic social justice tradition compels me to speak out against policies that cause harm to those who need support and respect. Medically unnecessary restrictions on abortion facilities are dangerous to women and families. When clinics must close because of these restrictions, it cuts off access to healthcare for thousands of women in the Commonwealth, and remaining clinics are forced to increase operating fees that burden women with higher costs. This is the opposite of protecting the health and safety of women.

When considering amendments for the regulations for Virginia's abortion facilities, I urge you to keep the needs of women in our community in mind. It is what the majority of Catholics in Virginia, like me, want and it is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

Kate Parke
Domestic Program Associate

PRESIDENT

Jon O'Brien

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