

April 19, 2011

The Honorable Pat H. Vance, Chair
The Honorable Shirley M. Kitchen, Minority Chair
Public Health and Welfare Committee
168 Capitol Building
PO Box 203031
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3031

Dear Senators Vance and Kitchen:

As an emergency physician, who is a strong advocate and supporter of women's health rights and a member of the Board of Directors of Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health, I read with great interest the testimony on the proposed statutory changes presented at the public hearing on April 13, 2011. I would like to speak about one of the questions raised by committee members, specifically, whether physicians who do abortions should be required to have hospital privileges.

My emergency department colleagues and I evaluate and treat many patients who have had diagnostic tests and outpatient procedures performed by various practitioners who do not have privileges at the hospitals where the patient is taken. In fact, many of these physicians do not necessarily have privileges at any hospital. As emergency physicians we are trained to evaluate, stabilize, and resuscitate any patient who is brought to our doors. Whether an abortion provider is or is not credentialed at a hospital has no effect on the care the patient receives in the emergency department. In addition, all hospitals have on-call specialists and hospitalists available should the patient require further, on-going inpatient or operative care. And finally, the abortion provider may have privileges at another hospital that is not the closest hospital to where they are providing abortion services, however, emergency medical services (EMS/ambulance) protocols dictate that patients be transported to the closest appropriate facility. In these cases, the provider would not be involved in the hospital care of the patient but rather would be cared for by the emergency department physician and staff.

I currently practice in Philadelphia in close proximity to abortion clinics. To the best of my knowledge, the providers do not have privileges at my hospital. In the rare instance of a problem or complication, the patient has been taken to my emergency department and has received prompt, expert care by my emergency medicine colleagues and hospital specialists.

I strongly urge that the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee reject legislation that requires abortion providers to maintain privileges at a neighboring hospital. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Ralph J. Riviello, MD, MS, FACEP
Associate Professor

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