

# After MCC push, state's abortion clinics to face tougher regulation

**By Maria Wiering**

*mwiering@CatholicReview.org*

Stiffer regulations for Maryland's surgical abortion facilities are slated to go into effect in July, according to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

The Maryland Catholic Conference applauded the regulations as measures "that will go a long way to protect the health and safety of women undergoing surgical abortions in Maryland" in a June 22 statement.

As public policy advocates for the state's Catholic bishops, the MCC opposes abortion, but since 2004 has been seeking better regulation of the states' abortion clinics, which were permitted to operate with less regulation than other out-patient surgical facilities.

"To be pro-life, you need to love the mother and the baby," said Nancy Paltell, MCC associate director for respect for life. "We're continuing to try to save the babies, of course, but we should at least also work to save the mothers."

According to a June 22 statement from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, or DHMH, "The purpose of the regulations is to protect the health and life of women seeking abortions by supporting the quality of surgical abortion services, while preserving patient access to these services in Maryland."

Prior to the new regulations, Maryland's abortion clinics were regulated as doctors' offices, not surgical centers, Paltell said.

The new regulations require outpatient abortion facilities not regulated by the state to obtain a license and meet requirements similar to those currently governing ambulatory surgical centers. The clinics are also subject to inspection by DHMH

staff.

Paltell hopes the new regulations prevent unsafe abortion procedures, such as the one that cost 21-year-old Denise Crowe her life in 2006. She died after her doctor administered too much anesthesia during an abortion at a Severna Park clinic.

Crowe's mother, Stephanie White has worked with the MCC to advocate for stricter abortion clinic regulations before the Maryland General Assembly.

Concerns for Maryland's abortion clinic safety received national attention after New Jersey doctor Steven Bringham took advantage of lax state laws to perform late-term abortions at a clinic in Elkton, although he was not licensed in the state.

In 2010, one of his patients suffered a ruptured uterus and had to be airlifted to The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore for treatment after Bringham failed to provide proper emergency care.

State legislation was introduced in 2011 to require the DHMH to toughen abortion clinic regulations. Although the legislation did not move out of committee, it compelled the DHMH to draft new regulations, which it has had the authority to do since 1992.

Abortion clinic regulations in other states vary, Paltell said, as do available abortion statistics. Maryland does not collect data on abortion-related deaths or injuries.

The new regulations are expected to affect about 20 Maryland abortion clinics. The MCC plans to make sure the clinics are held to the new standards, Paltell said.

*Copyright (c) June 26, 2012 CatholicReview.org*