

Baltimore maternity home suspends operations because of finances

Sparrow House, Baltimore's only maternity home for women in crisis pregnancies, suspended operations July 1 - a victim of a decline in financial support. The four women living at the house were relocated to other maternity homes throughout the state.

Located in the refurbished former convent of St. Benedict in West Baltimore, the maternity home was a formerly independent outreach based in Bel Air that relocated to Baltimore late last year. At that time, it became part of the Gabriel Network, a Bowie-based organization that provides support to women so they can choose life over abortion.

Anthony DiIulio, executive director of the Gabriel Network, said the troubled economy likely played a role in the decline in donations. The center was operating at a loss and unable to pay its bills, he said.

"The only way these homes work is with a groundswell of local support," said DiIulio, who is hopeful more donors will step forward to allow Sparrow House to reopen in the coming months. "There's clearly a need for this kind of home in Baltimore. We want to make sure pregnant women have a place to go if they are kicked out of their homes."

Sparrow House needs a minimum of \$6,000 a month to operate, DiIulio said. A supporter recently gave \$10,000 and other donors have stepped forward, bringing the current level of pledged support up to \$4,000 a month. St. Benedict, which rents the house to the Gabriel Network, has agreed to forgive the rent until Sparrow

House is able to raise additional funds and reopen.

“We want to do the Lord’s will in this mission,” DiIulio said. “There’s momentum building to keep this place open. As much as we can respond to the Lord, that’s the degree to which we’ll be successful.”

DiIulio said there is a need for monthly contributions. More importantly, he said, prayer is essential.

“That’s what we’re asking for first,” he said. “We are utterly dependent on prayer.”

Matthew Marshall, a “sidewalk counselor” who encourages women at abortion clinics to reconsider their options, is a strong supporter of Sparrow House. The house is needed so that women have the practical support if they choose to keep their babies, he said.

“It’s literally a life and death matter,” said Marshall, a Sparrow House donor. “If a woman doesn’t have housing, she’ll turn to abortion.”

Visit www.gabrielnetwork.org to make a donation.