

# State officials examining death that is allegedly tied to Germantown abortion clinic

**By Maureen Boyle**

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Pro-life groups held a vigil and press conference Feb. 11 near the Germantown office of abortionist Dr. LeRoy Carhart, offering prayers for a 29-year-old woman who, along with her unborn baby, died, allegedly after undergoing a late-term abortion last week at the upper Montgomery County abortion facility.

Representatives from area churches, the Maryland Coalition for Life, and other pro-life advocacy organizations spoke, urging Maryland state officials to further investigate the incident, shut down Carhart's Germantown Reproductive Health Services, as well as calling upon the state's lawmakers to ban late-term abortions in Maryland.

"There is a family in mourning, a town in mourning, a nation in mourning," Michael Martelli, executive director of the Maryland Coalition for Life, told more than 150 people who gathered to memorialize the deaths.

Father Frank Pavone, director of Priests for Life, said he would ask every Catholic parish priest in the United States to offer two Masses - one for the repose of the souls of the deceased woman and her baby and the other for the conversion of LeRoy Carhart.

"America must understand, when you destroy the child, you destroy the mother. You can't hurt one without hurting the other," he said. "It is another unspeakable tragedy ... Let us not forget this, and (let us) find a way to protect mothers. We will not rest until this tragedy ends."

According to news reports, the woman, who traveled from her native New York to Maryland, was 33 weeks along in her pregnancy. She died Feb. 7 at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville after suffering what are believed to be fatal complications from the multi-day abortion procedure.

Christa Lopiccolo, director of the Archdiocese of Washington's Office of Life Issues, also spoke to the crowd, addressing women and men contemplating an abortion.

"We are here to help you. No woman should feel compelled that this is the only solution to whatever trial she is facing," said Lopiccolo, adding the Church offers pre-natal assistance through pregnancy aid centers, the Gabriel Project, Isaiah's Promise, and post-abortive healing through Project Rachel.

"We are here to support you and walk with you. We join in sorrow for this family and all those who have suffered because of abortion," she said.

Since Carhart opened his abortion facility in Germantown 26 months ago, 80 babies' lives have been saved when their mothers changed their minds due to sidewalk counselors outside the clinic, said Rev. Patrick Mahoney of the Christian Defense Coalition.

"We come as prophetic witnesses to say never again," he said. "... We will not rest until this clinic is shut down and its license is revoked."

On Monday afternoon, an official from the Maryland Office of the Chief Medical Examiner told the Catholic Standard that the office is looking into the circumstances of the woman's death. "We are investigating the cause and manner of death," said Bruce Goldfarb, a spokesperson for the state's medical examiner.

Goldfarb said the autopsy report could take up to several weeks to complete. Once the investigation is finalized, he said the findings would be made public. "Every death certificate we issue and every death we investigate are public documents," he said.

There are no immediate plans to suspend the abortion facility's license during the medical examiner's investigation of Carhart's patient's death "since no cause of death has been determined yet," said Dori Henry, a spokesperson for the Maryland Department of Mental Health and Hygiene.

Dr. Tricia Nay, acting director of the Maryland Office of Health Care and Quality Control, the office that handles the licensing of all medical facilities in the state, spoke to the Catholic Standard and said Carhart's clinic is licensed under new state regulations of outpatient surgical centers enacted in July 2012.

Upon learning of news reports that a young woman died following a late-term abortion at a clinic operated by LeRoy Carhart, Dr. Nancy Paltell, associate director of life issues for the Maryland Catholic Conference, issued a statement calling for efforts to implement more stringent oversight of abortion clinics in the state.

The Department of Mental Health and Hygiene issued the stricter regulations last summer to close the loophole that had allowed surgical abortion facilities to be regulated simply as doctor offices. Last week, the department announced that for the first time it had licensed a number of clinics, including Carhart's clinic, but there is no evidence that any clinic has actually undergone a site inspection, according to the MCC.

Dr. Nay would not specifically address concerns raised during Monday's press

conference regarding the young woman's death after her abortion at Carhart's clinic or its lack of inspection, but said of any state-monitored medical facility, "If we are aware something has happened through news reports or a complaint, then yes, an on-site investigation by this office would be coordinated."

"This is a tragedy that could easily have been prevented with genuine oversight. I hope at the very least this incident will lead to the revocation of the license just issued to LeRoy Carhart's clinic, and to immediate inspections of all remaining facilities in Maryland," said Dr. Paltell.

An estimated 1,300 babies have died through late-term abortions at Carhart's clinic since it opened in December 2010, said Dr. Grace Morrison, who leads the Monday morning prayer vigils there.

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