The Pro-Abortion Lobby … Again?

The Catholic Review

When the story of the appalling incident involving a young woman's injuries at an abortion clinic in Elkton, in Cecil County, first surfaced last fall, voices on both sides of the abortion issue raised deep concern. Many were surprised to learn that the Free State's permissive abortion laws carried no power to prevent the kind of woefully inferior care the victim received at the clinic.

The fact that the victim was brought from another state to Maryland to "complete" an abortion also raised serious questions about the lack of regulation of abortion clinics in Maryland. That concern only deepened when LeRoy Carhart, the notorious late-term abortionist who has reportedly been ostracized even by many inside the abortion industry, sought out Germantown, in Montgomery County, to further his deadly practice. He seems to have fled Nebraska, which passed a new law banning abortions of five-month-old fetuses, for our abortion-friendly shores!

While we resolutely proclaim our staunch opposition to abortion, we were thankful for the sake of women's safety that legislation was introduced this year before the Maryland General Assembly to address the state's lack of oversight of abortion clinics. The bill enjoys bipartisan support, and is sponsored by Sen. Nancy Jacobs and Sen. Ed DeGrange in the Senate, and by Delegate Addie Eckardt and Delegate Pam Beidle in the House. By simply requiring that Maryland's abortion clinics be included in the state's laws regulating ambulatory surgical facilities, the legislation would ensure that this heinous and deadly procedure, like many other invasive outpatient surgeries, is performed in clinics that follow reasonable health and safety measures to protect women.

At lengthy hearings, further evidence was presented about the unacceptably high number of incidents involving injuries and even deaths of women in Maryland abortion clinics. The tragic case of one such woman who lost her life was movingly related by her mother, Stephanie White, whose story was also covered recently in The Catholic Review. Stories in The Baltimore Sun and on the evening news seemed

to send the same message: surely the state must do something to address these terrible incidents.

And yet, opponents to the legislation, led by the powerful pro-abortion lobby and its headliners, Planned Parenthood and NARAL, incredulously claimed they should not be required to meet the same standards as other ambulatory surgical centers. According to The Sun, "They said the requirements would be so costly that most of the 41 abortion providers in the state could not comply." In essence, they are saying that the profits of the abortion factories they represent are more important than the health and safety of the women on whom they perform surgery. What other medical practitioner could make this claim, let alone get away with it?

Such a response favoring costs over the safety of women may be shockingly callous, but sadly, is expected from these very powerful pro-abortion interests. Year after year, they have unwaveringly resisted any and every effort to secure even the most reasonable measures related to abortion. This lack of oversight is the reason why Maryland, amazingly, does not collect statistics on abortion, allows minor girls to receive abortions without the knowledge of their parents, and, according to the Guttmacher Institute, is one of only four states that voluntarily spends state Medicaid dollars to pay for abortions.

But while the response from the abortion lobby might be expected, the fact that our legislature appears ready to take no action on this legislation is unfathomable and unacceptable. With less than two weeks left in the legislative session, the committees that heard such compelling evidence of the need to regulate abortion clinics have still not passed legislation to ensure this will happen. It appears that Maryland lawmakers are once again poised to refuse to enact in law any change – no matter how clearly it is needed – to disrupt the status quo that the abortion lobby so fiercely defends in Maryland. Instead, they are relying on a letter from the state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, which claims, vaguely, that it will issue unspecified regulations this summer. The letter gives no promise that the regulations will meet the same standards as other ambulatory surgical facilities.

We must continue to be vigilant, and to demonstrate that the majority of Marylanders – even some who call themselves "pro-choice" – are opposed to giving

unfettered reign to the pro-abortion lobby in our state. Continue to call upon your legislators to take action on this issue by responding to the alert posted on the Maryland Catholic Conference's website at mdcathcon.org. And promise your lawmakers that you won't give up until the forces defending life and the genuine best interests of women prevail.