

Coalition to Protect Women's Health & Safety

Ensuring that women in South Central Wisconsin can access the full range of reproductive health care services they need

BACKGROUND

UW Hospital and Clinics, Meriter and the UW Medical Foundation have made the decision to provide 2nd trimester abortions at the Madison Surgery Center. Medical leaders in Dane County recognized a gap in care after the retirement of Dr. Dennis Christensen, who has been providing abortion care in Madison for many years. For the last five years, Dr. Christensen has been leasing space for the Madison Abortion Clinic in the Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin's (PPWI) Comprehensive Reproductive Health Center. At his retirement, Dr. Christensen gifted his practice to Planned Parenthood- who is now the abortion provider in Madison. However, PPWI is only accredited to provide abortion services up to 19 weeks; Dr. Christensen provided abortion care beyond that point. UW and Meriter have stepped in to fill that void to ensure that women.

This decision has created an orchestrated response by the anti-choice forces the Alliance Defense Fund, Pro-Life Wisconsin and Wisconsin Right to Life--groups that oppose all abortions and who generally oppose birth control. UW Hospital and Clinics Board of Authority will be voting on this decision on Wednesday, February 4th. The coalition has been convened to help supporters of women's health to engage in this discussion and show UW and Meriter that our community supports their decision to ensure that women have access to the full range of safe and legal abortions necessary.

TALKING POINTS

- Madison-area health care providers and professionals have taken the initiative in making sure abortion services are available and accessible to women and families, sometimes in the most tragic situations. These professionals, who take care of tens of thousands of patients throughout this state, identified a gap in women's reproductive health care that simply must be met so that women are not abandoned and their health and safety not jeopardized.
- The efforts of these health care entities and professionals reflects the strong commitment of the health care community to fulfill their public health responsibility to provide comprehensive health care to their patients and to the women of south-central Wisconsin.
- Without these efforts, women in certain untenable situations, such as those experiencing severe health problems in pregnancy or who have been told that a wanted pregnancy has gone tragically wrong, would have no where to go in our community. These health situations are not usually known until the second trimester. Though only 3% of abortions are performed after 20 weeks, these patients need to be taken care of in the most compassionate, comprehensive medical setting, which is what is being proposed by this initiative.
- Under state and federal law, no public monies can be used for abortion services. Abortions performed under the current proposal will be paid for with patient fees which will compensate and cover the medical costs.
- Abortion is illegal after fetal viability (typically between 23 and 24 weeks) unless a woman's life or health is threatened. There is no physician in Wisconsin, however, who performs abortions after fetal viability.