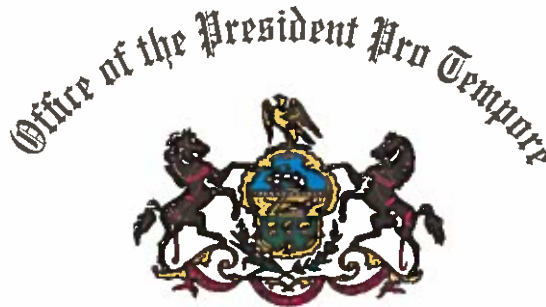


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Senate of Pennsylvania

June 5, 2017

Honorable Karen Murphy
Secretary
PA Department of Health
8th Floor West - Health & Welfare Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Secretary Murphy:

We are writing today in regards to a recent disturbing report on an inspection which the Department of Health (DOH) conducted in February of Hillcrest Women's Medical Center in Harrisburg. The inspection uncovered numerous health and safety deficiencies and violations. DOH found that although Hillcrest was admitting and treating minor patients, eight employees did not have required background checks and "the facility was not in compliance with the Child Protective Services Law."

Further, the report states that the clinic "failed to correctly document the administration of local anesthetic used for abortion procedures," and there were no local anesthesia policies for patients undergoing surgical abortions. Inspectors also found expired medications, needles and syringes in paper wraps that were deteriorated and yellow with age, and chlamydia and gonorrhea swabs that expired in 2004. The abortion clinic was cited for not having a quality assurance program or evidence that the staff met to discuss ways to improve patient care. Finally, Hillcrest could not provide documentation that the consultant physician was board-certified in obstetrics and gynecology nor did the abortion clinic employ or use the services of a registered nurse.

These health and safety violations are obviously deeply troubling. However, even more problematic appears to be DOH's response, which was to allow the abortion clinic to continue operating while granting Hillcrest a six month grace period to correct the cited "deficiencies". To make matters worse, this was Hillcrest's fourth finding of deficiencies in just the past six years.

The General Assembly overwhelmingly passed Act 122 of 2011 directing DOH to license and inspect abortion clinics in the same manner as other Ambulatory Surgical Facilities. This was done with the intent of ensuring that abortion clinics were meeting basic requirements in order to keep their patients safe. Hillcrest is clearly failing to live up to this standard.

Honorable Karen Murphy
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Furthermore, Section 51.41 of DOH's Health Facilities Regulations grants the Department the authority to suspend or revoke a license or fine a facility which is in violation of such health and safety standards. However, it appears none of these appropriate sanctions were pursued in this situation. Indeed, Hillcrest is still open and accepting patients today.

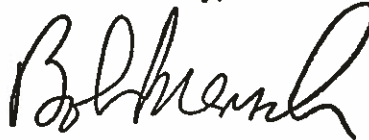
The DOH inspection report portrays a facility which is clearly unsafe and unhealthy for both patients and staff alike. Given this, we would like an explanation as to why DOH did not immediately move to suspend or revoke Hillcrest Women's Medical Center's license upon finding such numerous egregious violations.

We look forward to your timely response regarding this critical health and safety matter.

Sincerely,



Joe Scarnati
State Senator – 25th District



Bob Mensch
State Senator – 24th District



John DiSanto
State Senator – 15th District

JBS/cl