

DAVID YURMAN

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Facebook reacts after Indiana congresswoman seeks to stop new abortion clinic

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(Photo: Provided photo.)

This week, U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, R-Jimtown, asked the state health department to reject a permit for a new women's health clinic in northern Indiana.

And a firestorm on Facebook ensued.

On Monday, Walorski, who represents the 2nd District, wrote to the Indiana State Department of Health. Her letter asked health officials to reject an application by the Whole Woman's Health Alliance of Austin, Texas, for what Walorski said was "an abortion facility in South Bend, Indiana."

Walorski then posted on Facebook, saying, "Every human life is precious and deserves our protection." She also said stopping the new medical clinic from opening was necessary to "protect the sanctity of life."

Her Facebook post attracted a blizzard of reaction — more than 250 comments and 130 shares.

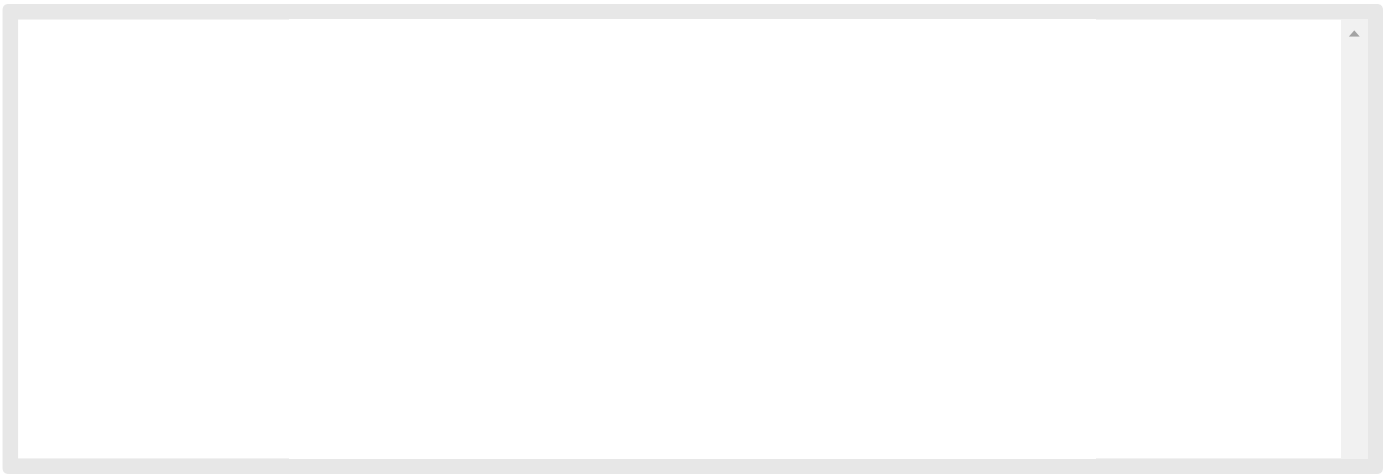
Some were supportive:

- *"God bless you lady I hope you can stop it."*
- *"Thank you! Abortion is my #1 concern."*
- *"Thank you. Abortion is NOT health care. Prenatal care is then adoption. God bless."*

Others not so much:

- *"Stop forcing your religious beliefs on Hoosiers. If you believe abortion is wrong, I support your choice not to get one."*

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- *"Now that you proved that you are pro birth, show that you are pro life by getting help for the children after they are born."*
- *"Please step away from my rights and let those women who need the services of an abortion clinic get them."*

Social media responses on Facebook were mixed. More than two-thirds of those who commented on Walorski's post were against her action. However, there were 460 who liked it, another 80 or so who loved it and 165 others who said it made them angry.

A "freestanding entity" that performs abortions must be licensed as an abortion clinic, the state health department's website says. That doesn't include hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers or even doctor's offices that perform abortions, as long as abortions are not the primary surgical procedure done there and abortion-inducing drugs are not the primarily prescribed drug.

Such clinics' licenses must be renewed annually, and state health inspectors also must inspect abortion clinics at least once every two years.

The application by Whole Woman's Health, filed on Aug. 1, says the clinic will not perform surgical abortions; it will only offer women an option of an abortion using the medication mifepristone, also known as RU-486. The application includes a request to waive some conditions of current state law regarding abortion clinics, such as the need for a recovery room. Whole Woman says such a room won't be needed, since a recovery period isn't necessary in a nonsurgical abortion.

In her letter, Walorski praised past efforts in Indiana to reduce the number of abortions.

"Indiana and its leaders have worked hard to combat the rate of abortions within the state," Walorski told state health officials. "These crucial gains in protecting the sanctity of life would be undermined should the application receive the state's approval."

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An abortion clinic in South Bend closed in 2015. Dr. Ulrich Klopfer had provided abortions and other health services to women in the area for 30 years. His clinic was closed after officials from the Indiana Medical Licensing Board took steps to revoke his license to provide abortions amid mounting complaints about his failure to meet the state's record-reporting requirements.

The closest facilities to South Bend where women can receive abortions are in Kalamazoo, Mich., or Chicago.



Rep. Jackie Walorski
about a week ago



Every human life is precious and deserves our protection. Yesterday I sent a letter to the Indiana State Department of Health urging them to protect the sanctity of life by rejecting the application for a new abortion clinic in South Bend. Click below to read it:

503 362 143

In her letter to the Indiana State Department of Health, Walorski also said rejecting the application of the Whole Woman's Health Alliance would send "a powerful signal that Indiana cherishes the value of life and will continue the push to reduce the state's abortion rate."

A spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood wouldn't comment directly on Walorski's letter, but Ali Slocum, director of marketing and communications, provided a response to Indiana lawmakers' past efforts to limit abortions in the state.

"Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky Inc. stands up and will continue standing up to any and all who try to erect barriers to essential health care services. Abortion is health care," said Slocum.

The Whole Woman's Health Alliance's website describes it as "a privately owned, feminist organization committed to providing holistic care for women." It provides abortions and other gynecological services. The IndyStar reached out to the organization, but it has yet to comment on Walorski's attempt to block its application.

Planned Parenthood has been represented by the ACLU of Indiana in its lawsuits to block several recent laws that would make it harder for women and minors in Indiana to get an abortion.

U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Walton Pratt issued a permanent injunction in September [preventing an Indiana law from taking effect that she ruled was unconstitutional.](#) ([/story/news/2017/09/25/federal-judge-blocks-indianas-new-abortion-law/699590001/](#)) House Enrolled Act 1337, signed by former Gov. Mike Pence, would have prohibited abortions solely because a fetus had been potentially diagnosed with a disability, such as Down syndrome. The law also would have required that women undergo an ultrasound at least 18 hours prior to having an abortion.

U.S. District Court Judge Sarah Evans Barker [issued a preliminary injunction in June to block Senate Enrolled Act 404](#) ([/story/news/2017/06/28/court-issues-preliminary-injunction-against-indiana-abortion-law/437851001/](#)), which was signed by Gov. Eric Holcomb. Current Indiana law says a girl younger than 18 must either have parental consent before getting an abortion or must petition the court to have that condition waived. However, the new law would have given judges the discretion to decide whether it is in that minor's best interest to tell her parents before the procedure.

[Attorney General Curtis Hill has said he will appeal](#) ([/story/news/2017/07/15/indiana-appeal-preliminary-injunction-abortion-notification-bill/481208001/](#)) Pratt's ruling to the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

IndyStar reporters Fatima Hussein and Holly V. Hays contributed to this story.

Call IndyStar digital producer Dwight Adams at (317) 444-6532. Follow him on Twitter: [@hdwightadams](#).

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