

House Committees Release Planned Parenthood Report; Chairs File Legislation

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri House Committees on Children and Families and Ways and Means released their report and legislative recommendations Thursday following the investigation into Planned Parenthood actions in Missouri.

State representatives Diane Franklin, R-Camdenton, Children and Families chair, and Andrew Koenig, R-Valley Park, Ways and Means chair, outlined the investigation's findings and steps forward to turn gray areas in the state's abortion laws and regulations black and white. Franklin has filed four abortion bills stemming from the hearings with at least two more bills to come concerning family planning funding prioritization and legislative oversight. Koenig has introduced legislation regarding the abortion-to-disposal process for tracking and reporting purposes.

"The hearing process afforded Missourians the opportunity to learn of the policies and procedures the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) follows relating to abortion licensure, facility inspections and reporting documents," Franklin and Koenig wrote in an accompanying letter to House Speaker Todd Richardson, and also mention difficulties obtaining information from DHSS officials and Planned Parenthood.

The investigation began following the mention of St. Louis' Planned Parenthood facility in a series of videos released last summer exposing the organization's practices. Committee chairs invited top Planned Parenthood officials from its St. Louis region to testify on the organization's procedures to no avail. As a result, the committees were unable to confirm whether the practices occurred or did not occur in Missouri, and committee leaders said measures stemming from the investigation would be "proactive" to make certain practices seen in the videos do not occur in the state.

"It is inconsiderate to Missourians and a great disappointment that those with the most knowledge on procedures and processes under review put up roadblocks, leaving in the end inconclusive results of the investigated issue," Franklin and Koenig wrote. "In Missouri, we can do better."

The letter and report outlines proposals for Missouri to better address Missouri women's healthcare needs, to confidently assure fetal body parts are not trafficked in Missouri and to obtain "humane and dignified disposition of the aborted."

Hearings occurred in August and October with testimony from then-DHSS Administrator Gail Vasterling; Dr. James Miller, Pathology Services, Inc., president; Abby Johnson, former Planned Parenthood clinic administrator; and a number of concerned professionals and citizens.

"I look forward to moving these and other pieces of legislation to reform the abortion and disposition processes in Missouri," Franklin said. "The committee hearings were the preliminary steps to taking action to protect and dignify innocent life in Missouri."