



## **Women's Health Advocates Applaud Commissioner's Decision to Amend Restrictions on Women's Health Centers**

*Decision marks conclusion of Governor-ordered review; will now head to Virginia Board of Health for approval*

*Richmond, VA* - Today, Virginia Commissioner of Health Dr. Marissa Levine announced her recommendation to amend medically-unnecessary restrictions on Virginia women's health centers. Levine decided to amend the controversial restrictions - overwhelmingly opposed by the Virginia medical community and responsible for the closure of two women's health centers - after receiving more than 10,000 comments in support of revision during a recent 45-day public comment period.

The Commissioner's announcement marks the conclusion of a periodic review of the regulations ordered in May by Governor McAuliffe, who called the current regulations "extreme and punitive" and voiced concern that they would jeopardize women's health in the Commonwealth. Commissioner Levine had until October 1 to decide whether to repeal, amend, or uphold the regulations. A Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) will now head to Board of Health members for a vote, who will ultimately decide whether to accept the Commissioner's recommendation and start the process of amending the current restrictions.

"As a practicing physician for 25 years, ensuring the health and safety of my patients is my absolute top priority," said Dr. Wendy Klein of Richmond. "The current restrictions on women's health centers have no medical basis, and seriously threaten women's health by forcing good health centers to close and by cutting off access to critical medical care. That's why I, along with an overwhelming majority of Virginia's doctors and medical professionals, applaud Commissioner Levine today for her recommendation to amend these medically-unnecessary restrictions. I urge the Board of Health to initiate the process immediately and amend the regulations to reflect evidence based medicine and to protect public health."

"Commissioner Levine's decision today is an important first step to right a wrong and fix these dangerous restrictions on women's health centers," added Tarina Keene, co-chair of the Virginia Coalition to Protect Women's Health. "The current restrictions were designed to shut down women's health centers and cut off access to comprehensive reproductive health care for Virginia's women and families, including life-saving cancer screenings, birth control, and safe,

legal first-trimester abortion. We are proud of Commissioner Levine's recommendation and of her clear commitment to protecting public health in the Commonwealth. We urge Board of Health members to follow the Commissioner's lead and ensure that these regulations are based in medicine - not politics."

During a recent public comment period, more than 10,600 Virginians urged the Department of Health to repeal and/or amend the restrictions, or about 80% of the total number of comments received.

**###**

For more information about the Virginia Coalition to Protect Women's Health or to speak with a spokesperson, please contact the following:

Aisha Huertas Michel, *ACLU of Virginia*, (804) 523-2155

Anna Scholl, *ProgressVA*, (540) 460-1269

Courtney E. Jones, *Planned Parenthood Health Systems Action Fund* (434) 260-1264

Alena Yarmosky, *NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia* (240) 595-2972