



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Governor McDonnell Appoints Anti-Choice OB/GYN to Virginia Board of Health**

#### **New Board Member Evidence of a Deep Conflict of Interest and Direct Ties to Religious Anti-Choice Advocacy as McDonnell Administration Continues to Block Women's Access to Health Care**

**Richmond, VA, July 16, 2012** – Just one month after a critical vote about women's health and abortion in the Virginia Board of Health, Governor Bob McDonnell (R) has appointed a vocal public opponent of legal first-trimester abortion, Dr. John W. Seeds of VCU, to sit on the board that is tasked with the future of women's health access in Virginia. A member of the "medical resource council" of the religiously-based advocacy group, The Family Foundation, that opposes abortion under any circumstances, Seeds has a long history of testimony in the Virginia General Assembly opposing abortion. He is also the vice chair of Virginia OBGYNs for Life (see <http://www.vachristian.org/advisors/120-john-w-seeds-md.html>).

Seeds was a member of the original medical advisory group – six top physicians across Virginia – appointed in 2011 by the Virginia Department of Health to draft new regulations for first-trimester abortion in Virginia. With the exception of publicly anti-choice Dr. Seeds, physicians in the group, including Dr. James "Jef" Ferguson of the University of Virginia's School of Medicine, denounced the draft regulations as "not medically necessary" and politically motivated.

On June 15, the Virginia Board of Health voted (7 to 4 vote) to amend a key provision of the draft proposed regulations of first-trimester abortion in Virginia – the amendment means that existing women's health care centers that provide safe, legal first-trimester abortion care will be "grandfathered in," rather than being subjected to onerous and unnecessary forced building requirements. The Board of Health is now awaiting news about Governor McDonnell and Attorney General Cuccinelli's approval of the Board's decision, but the process will likely bring the draft regulations back to the Board for another vote, but this time, with Dr. Seeds as a voting member.

"For Governor McDonnell to appoint Dr. James Seeds, a prominent member of an ideological anti-choice organization, to a public health body charged with acting objectively on the side of patient safety, is a clear and shocking conflict of interest," said Tarina Keene of the Virginia Coalition to Protect Women's Health. "With this appointment, this activist governor continues to

display a disdain for women’s health, playing politics with lives instead of acting in the public interest.”

The regulations were drafted by the Virginia Department of Health, but Attorney General Cuccinelli recommended substantial changes in a process that illustrates a new trend in creating ideologically-driven state law through the regulatory system, despite lack of public approval. When the regulations become law, they will be enforced by the Virginia Department of Health, which incorporates counsel from Attorney General Cuccinelli. Despite the administration’s official public statement about “[safety and wellbeing of patients](#)” as rationale for the regulations, Attorney General Cuccinelli has stated publicly to at least one pro-life organization that the goal is to “end abortion in America” ([see video interview with Pro-Life News from May 8](#)).

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### **ABOUT THE VIRGINIA COALITION TO PROTECT WOMEN’S HEALTH**

The Virginia Coalition to Protect Women’s Health formed in 2011 as a response to the attack on women’s health and safety prompted by Senate Bill 924. The Virginia Coalition to Protect Women’s Health strives to protect and ensure access for all women in all regions of Virginia to safe first-trimester abortion and comprehensive reproductive health care services. The Coalition is committed to ensuring any regulations are based solely on medical and public health considerations. The Coalition is opposed to excessive, burdensome or unneeded regulations that undermine patient access to medical care for political or ideological purposes. Members, partners and allies include: ACLU of Virginia, Annandale Women and Family Center, Center for Reproductive Rights, Falls Church Healthcare Center, Feminist Majority Foundation, NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia, National Abortion Federation, NOVA Women’s Healthcare, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia, Progress Virginia, Richmond Medical Center for Women, Virginia NOW, and Virginia Organizing.