

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Planned Parenthood of Illinois Applauds Tough Law on Lethal Violence Against Medical Professionals

Governor Patrick Quinn signs law that creates a penalty enhancement for the murder of doctors, nurses, and other health care providers.

Chicago, IL — Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL) applauds Governor Patrick Quinn for signing into law legislation that will send a strong message to those who perpetrate violence against health care professionals.

The law enhances the penalty for the first degree murder of a physician, physician assistant, psychologist, nurse, or advanced practice nurse to natural life imprisonment. Under the new law the defendant must know or should have known that the murdered individual was a physician, physician assistant, psychologist, nurse, or advanced practice nurse. Moreover, the victim must have been killed in the course of acting in his or her professional capacity, or to prevent him or her from acting in that capacity, or in retaliation for his or her acting in that capacity.

Representative Angelo “Skip” Saviano (R-River Grove) and Senator Don Harmon (D-Oak Park) sponsored the legislation.

In May of 2009, Dr. George Tiller, an OB-GYN in Wichita, KS who provided abortions, was murdered in his church. His killer openly admitted that his motive was to stop the medical care provided by Dr. Tiller. Dr. Tiller was the fourth physician who provided abortion care to be murdered since 1993.

Since the assassination of Dr. Tiller, PPIL has seen a significant surge in the size and aggressiveness of protests in front of our health centers. PPIL has seen an increase in hostile threats via mail, packages, and phone. Because of these recent developments and the past murders of other physicians and medical staff who provided reproductive health care to women, PPIL fully supports the new law.

“We can’t wait for another terrible tragedy like the murder of Dr. Tiller to happen before strengthening our laws in Illinois,” said Carole Brite, President and CEO of PPIL. “We need to send a message now that the murder of a medical professional in order to prevent him or her from caring for patients is unacceptable and will be severely punished.”

Previously, Illinois law carried penalty enhancements for the murder of emergency rescue personnel such as ambulance drivers, but not for medical professionals like physicians or nurses.

“Health care professionals have an ethical duty to provide medical care to their patients,” said Brite. “It is unthinkable that someone would use violence, let alone murder, to interfere with that care. Our medical staff deserves the ability to work and live in a safe environment. Our patients deserve the right to receive the health care they need without added worries about safety.”

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Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL) provides affordably priced high-quality reproductive health care services to women and families throughout Illinois. Through health care services, educational programs and advocacy efforts, PPIL works to ensure and protect the reproductive rights of each individual. For more information, visit www.ppil.org.