Policy and Politics: The effects of facility regulation on abortion access in Virginia

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Abstract
Pro-choice organizations claim that by 2014, over half of the twenty health centers providing abortions in Virginia will be forced to discontinue services as a result of a regulation categorizing these facilities as hospitals. Proponents of the regulation claim its purpose is to increase patient safety; however, higher-risk medical procedures, such as cosmetic and dental surgeries, are not subject to similar regulatory scrutiny. This investigation seeks to understand general conditions under which the categorization of abortion providers as hospitals impacts operational costs, as well as bars entry of new providers into the market. Using Virginia as a case study, it also specifically explores how local politics impacts the implementation of health planning, policies, and regulations.