

Testimony in Support of Zoning Text Amendment #2023-00002 - To be delivered at the Planning Commission meeting on 3/30/23

Good evening. My name is Emily Eckert and I am here speaking on behalf of the Alexandria Commission for Women. As the Planning Commission is likely aware, on June 24, 2022, the United States Supreme Court released its decision in *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization*, concluding that "the Constitution does not confer a right to abortion...and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives." Within days of this decision, the Alexandria City Council passed Resolution 3087, which the Commission for Women was proud to support. Among other things, Resolution 3087 directed the City Manager to work with the Director of Planning and Zoning, in addition to the City Attorney, to review existing land-use regulations regarding the operation of abortion clinics and to bring forth recommendations for amending the zoning text to ensure unfettered administrative approval for abortion clinics in any commercial or mixed-use zones. Following this directive, the staff have brought forth Zoning Text Amendment #2023-00002, which would more clearly delineate between "medical care facilities" and "health professional offices" and clarify that abortion clinics are a "by-right use" authorized under both definitions.

The Commission for Women strongly supports the zoning amendments proposed by the staff and believes these amendments will make it clear that abortion clinics are welcome here. Not only would the establishment of new clinics benefit our friends and neighbors throughout the Commonwealth, but it would also benefit people living in our border states of West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, where abortion has either been completely banned or severely restricted.

The Commission for Women urges the Planning Commission to recommend these amendments for consideration by City Council. Thank you.

Emily Eckert, MS
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