

Texas teen who wanted abortion prevented by state-funded clinic

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The *Washington Post* profiled this week Brooke Alexander, 18, a Corpus Christi, Texas teen who found out two days before the state's fetal heartbeat abortion ban went into effect on September 1, 2021 that she was pregnant.

Alexander sought to end her pregnancy, but the abortion clinic two hours away from her in South Texas was completely booked, with women then racing to the center to get abortions before the law went into effect. Alexander was offered the names and addresses of abortion clinics in New Mexico by the South Texas clinic, a drive more than 12 hours away from Corpus Christi.

Under the new Texas law, if a so-called "fetal heartbeat" is detected, then those involved in the abortion can be sued for \$10,000 each. Since few women know they are pregnant before six weeks, when movement in the undeveloped fetal heart mass first becomes detectable, the law effectively bans abortions in Texas with no exception for rape or incest. Abortion clinics in Texas now only accept those who have no observable "fetal heartbeat" lest they incur a flurry of lawsuits from anti-abortion zealots.

Alexander, having been informed of this by her then boyfriend Billy, looked for a clinic where an ultrasound could be performed, unknowingly booking an appointment with a religious affiliated anti-abortion clinic.

The clinic in question, misleadingly named the Pregnancy Center of the Coastal Bend, is affiliated with Care Net, an evangelical Christian network of "crisis pregnancy centers" which are set up for the sole purpose of dissuading women from having abortions, with thousands of centers around the country. It is one of two such organizations in the US which have close ties to the Republican Party. A banner on the website instructs like-minded religious zealots to tell their elected officials "that we support the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*," while falsely claiming that the American public supports overturning the right to abortion.

In fact, the banning of abortion and associated attack on *Roe* are wildly unpopular, with a PBS Newshour/NPR/Marist poll showing that 64 percent oppose overturning the 1973 Supreme Court decision, while those

identifying as "pro-choice" are at a near-record high of 55 percent. A Gallup poll from May 2021 showed support for abortion in all or most cases at 80 percent.

According to an article by Public Health Watch, the anti-abortion "crisis centers" receive funding from the Texas government under the Alternatives to Abortion program. Funding has surged by 1,900 percent since the program started in 2006, rising from \$5 million to \$100 million.

Refuting anti-abortion forces' claim that the program is about protecting life, its funding comes from commensurate cuts in other programs such as \$20 million from a clean air program in 2017, and \$20 million from a health technology budget in 2021, according to the *Texas Tribune*.

Meanwhile, abortion clinics in the state have been continually under attack for years, leading to the number of clinics decreasing from an already anemic 40 in 2013 to 20 in 2022 for a state of 29 million people. At the same time, 200 anti-abortion "crisis centers" exist in Texas, which is 10 times the number of abortion clinics. In the United States as a whole, "crisis centers" outnumber abortion clinics three to one.

According to an October 2021 court filing by Planned Parenthood, one woman, who later filed a lawsuit against one such crisis center, was delayed from receiving treatment for her pregnancy by the center. The woman experienced "extreme" morning sickness during her pregnancy and was forced to seek help out of state due to the delay and pay \$800 to "maintain her privacy from family members on her insurance plan."

As detailed in the filing, many others were prevented from having abortions, most of them poor and working class, teenagers, students, and without sufficient financial means to adequately care for children.

One was 16 years old and described as a "bright student" but in an unstable household. Another worked 55-60 hours a week and was in college. Another feared losing her retail job as there were three months of "blackout dates" where she could not take time off out of fear for losing her job. Another already had five children.

While at the anti-abortion crisis center, Alexander was given an anti-abortion pamphlet published by the Texas Department of State Health Services titled “A Woman’s Right to Know.”

The pamphlet, an article of government propaganda, reads in bold letters: “No one can force you to have an abortion” and proceeds to advise women to talk to their “doctor, counselor or spiritual adviser about your feelings” and to call 911 if they feel “pressure” from someone to have an abortion. It paints a false picture of abortion being unsafe and posing physical and mental health risks such as infertility, increasing breast cancer risk, and death.

Alexander, following a state-mandated imaging session of what was to be twins, was pressured by center staff and then her mother, who was apparently swayed by the staff, to not get an abortion. Faced with mounting difficulties, the unavailability of abortion, state funded anti-abortion clinics and propaganda, Alexander gave birth to the twins.

According to the *Washington Post*, Jana Pinson, the executive director of the Pregnancy Center of the Coastal Bend, later gloated about changing Alexander’s mind to the Coastal Bend Republican Coalition on May 19 as part of its weekly meeting at a local barbecue joint.

The anti-abortion crisis centers categorize those who visit, labeling those who are considering abortion or decided on abortion as “abortion-minded” or “abortion vulnerable.”

The *Post* wrote “Last year, Pinson said, 583 abortion-minded and abortion-vulnerable women chose to continue their pregnancies after visiting their facility. At their banquet in March, with over 2,800 attendees from across the region, Pinson and her staff lit 583 candles. One of those was for Brooke.”

Two weeks after Pinson’s gloating, the draft Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe* was leaked.

“Who’s to say what I would have done if the law wasn’t in effect?” Alexander told the *Post*, noting all the things she could not do anymore such as nights at the skate park and trips to the mall. “I can’t just really be free,” she said. “I guess that really sums it up. That’s a big thing that I really miss.”

Indeed, the right to an abortion is a measure that provides the equality and freedom to women who otherwise would not have the right. The attack on abortion seeks not only to enshrine inequality, but as a springboard for broader attacks on democratic rights.

As the WSWS explained:

[Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito’s] draft decision goes on to deny the validity of “rights that are not mentioned in the Constitution.

Virtually all modern civil rights are not “mentioned in the Constitution,” for the simple reason that modern society did not exist when the Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791. However limited and belated, the expansion of constitutional rights in the US—from the aftermath of the American Revolution and Civil War to the period of the Civil Rights movement—took the form of recognizing in the essential principles of the founding documents new implications for democratic rights in modern society.

Alito’s formulas provide a framework not just for dismantling the right to abortion, but for putting all modern civil rights on the chopping block.

This attack on abortion has been facilitated by the Democrats, who have done nothing to mobilize opposition to attacks on abortion and are organically incapable of doing so, fearing a mass movement of the working class which would escape their control and overtake them. Instead, they cynically work to redirect opposition into the dead end of the Democratic Party, which has done nothing to enshrine *Roe* over the past almost 50 years.

While posturing as defenders of the right to abortion, the Democrats field anti-abortion candidates, as is the case with Texas state Representative Ryan Guillen, who voted for the Texas “fetal heartbeat” abortion ban. Nothing is being done by the Democrats even now despite the fact that, if they so choose, they can overturn the filibuster and enshrine abortion protections in law. The criminal inaction of the Democrats illustrates that any real movement to protect democratic rights must necessarily be based on a mass movement of the working class for socialism.



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