

## **RUSSIAN CHURCH: REMOVE ABORTION FROM TAX-SUPPORTED STATE INSURANCE PROGRAM**



The Russian Orthodox Church has again raised its voice against the inclusion of abortion in the services that are covered by the taxpayer-funded state insurance program.

In particular, Maria Studenikina, the head of the Synodal Charity and Social Service Department's pro-life division and director of the Orthodox "Mercy" service's "Home for Mothers," spoke in favor of the proposal put forth by Oleg Apolikhin, the Russian Ministry of Health's chief reproductologist, to remove abortions from the health insurance system.

At present, the state guarantees that it will cover abortions costs using taxpayer money.

“We support Oleg’s desire to jump-start these urgent issues. The awareness that abortion is the murder of a person is steadily growing in society,” Studenikina said, citing sociological research that shows that almost 80% of Russians are in agreement with this position of the Russian Church, reports the Church’s site.

The measures put forth by the reproductologist aim to ultimately bring public conscience and legislation into agreement, Studenikina said.

“Abortion should become unfashionable, and it is becoming unfashionable. For a modern educated person, this should become a socially negative phenomenon,” Apolikhin earlier said.

The fight against abortion is the Church’s most important social work, Patriarch Kirill said at the VII Church-wide Congress for Social Work in Moscow in 2017.

His Holiness has twice addressed the State Duma, calling for them to find a solution to the “horribly high” number of abortions that continue to plague Russia. In 2016, he signed a public petition calling for anti-abortion law to be adopted.

Earlier, in 2015, the Congress of Russian Pediatricians supported the Patriarch’s initiative to remove abortions from the insurance system and to more actively conduct abortion prevention work.

With the participation of the Russian Church, the number of women’s shelters has grown from 1 to 75 over the past 9 years, and more than 200 humanitarian aid centers have been opened, where women can get cribs, strollers, baby care products, food, and clothing for free, Studenikina highlighted. Additionally, the Synodal Department’s “Save Life” program has helped prevent more than 13,000 abortions in 5.5 years.

On November 19, four Orthodox hierarchs serving in Argentina issued a protest announcement against a proposed bill that would legalize abortion.

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