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# Planned Parenthood, ACLU sue Maine over law that says abortions may be performed only by doctors

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Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union sued the state of Maine on Wednesday over a law that requires only doctors perform abortion procedures, the two organizations said. (2015 file photo/Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

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Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union sued (<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-abortion/aclu-planned-parenthood-challenge-maine-abortion-law-idUSL2N1M12I3>) the state of Maine Wednesday over a law requiring that only doctors (<https://townhall.com/tipsheet/laurettabrown/2017/09/21/planned-parenthood-aclu-sue-maine-over-law-that-says-only-doctors-can-perform-abortions-n2384344>) perform abortion procedures, the two organizations said.

According to the Portland Press Herald

(<http://www.pressherald.com/2017/09/20/planned-parenthood-challenging-maine-law-that-restricts-abortion-providers/>), the law, which was enacted in 1979, says that only medical doctors may perform abortions, prohibiting other medical staff such as nurse practitioners and nurse-midwives from performing the procedure. The report noted that 41 other states have similar laws.

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## **Why are the groups suing?**

Planned Parenthood and the ACLU filed a federal lawsuit challenging the law as “unconstitutional.” The ACLU argued on its website (<https://www.aclu.org/blog/reproductive-freedom/abortion/aclu->

and-planned-parenthood-take-unconstitutional-abortion) that “qualified nurse practitioners and nurse-midwives” can “safely and effectively” perform abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy.

In a statement (<https://www.aclumaine.org/en/press-releases/aclu-and-planned-parenthood-go-offense-maine>), Nicole Clegg, the vice president of public policy for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, said, “What people outside Maine may not realize is how rural our state is, and how hard it can be to access health care.

“A person’s ability to make their own personal decisions about abortion shouldn’t depend on their zip code,” Clegg said.

Zachary Heiden, legal director of the ACLU of Maine, said in a statement, “Anyone who has made it through a Maine winter in a rural area knows that travel can be dangerous or impossible at times – it’s wrong to make a woman risk a journey of hundreds of miles to get an abortion when there are qualified providers nearby.”

## **Who opposes the lawsuit?**

Teresa McCann-Tumidajski, the executive director of Maine Right to Life, told the Press Herald that the group opposes the lawsuit.

“We are against violence inside and outside the womb,” McCann-Tumidajski said. “We don’t want to open up new avenues of access to abortion.”