

Planned Parenthood Seeks to End Idaho Abortion Law

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(CN) – The largest provider of reproductive health services in Idaho filed a federal lawsuit against the state Friday, claiming that Idaho’s physician-only law banning advanced practice clinicians from performing abortion services presents an undue burden on women seeking abortions and is “out of step with the State’s treatment of comparable health services and medically unjustified.”

Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands filed the [lawsuit](#) Friday against the attorney general’s office, county prosecutors and the state Boards of Medicine and Nursing, stating that the law “significantly constrains when and where abortions are available” for women in Idaho, which results in expensive travel costs and delayed access to care.

According to the lawsuit, clinicians such as nurse practitioners and advanced practice registered nurses can legally perform many procedures that are “equally or more complex” than aspiration abortion, including uterine and cervical biopsies and inserting and removing intrauterine devices. These clinicians practice under a physician’s supervision, but that supervision does not need to be in person.

Mary Stark, family nurse practitioner for Planned Parenthood, performs medication and abortion services to patients in Washington and Oregon and other services to Idaho patients. She said in a statement that “my qualifications to provide an abortion don’t disappear when I cross the border into Idaho, but this law keeps me from being able to provide the care I was trained to do.”

Legal Voice senior attorney Kim Clark said in a statement that Idaho’s law was “created in the wake of Roe v. Wade as a way to protect women seeking abortion care from unlicensed providers.” She claims that times have changed and the law is “medically unfounded” and a violation of Idahoans’ constitutional rights, creating barriers to people of color, the uninsured and low-income and others who live in rural areas.

According to the lawsuit, only five locations statewide provide abortion care as of 2014 and two

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are by doctors in private practice who may not accept all patients. Ninety-five percent of Idaho counties do not have clinics that provide abortions.

Even in areas with abortion providers, the law limits the days which women can seek services from Planned Parenthood in Idaho. According to the lawsuit, that includes Thursdays in Meridian, two Wednesdays a month in Twin Falls and Fridays in Boise. Medication abortion is only available by telemedicine one or two half-days per week.

Hannah Brass Greer, chief legal counsel for the Planned Parenthood branch, said in a statement, “Removing this medically unjustified restriction on APC’s scope of practice would dramatically reduce delays and the medical, emotional, and financial harm that women in Idaho are experiencing” because of this law.

She added that clinicians “can and do care for pregnant patients experiencing miscarriages using identical medications and techniques” as with abortions, and go through extensive training to deliver high-quality care and ensure safe procedures.

The complaint asks the court to declare that the physician-only law unconstitutional and unenforceable.

The Idaho Attorney General’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday afternoon.

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