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Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri go to Supreme Court on behalf of patients

Eighth Circuit ruling threatens abortion access in Missouri

ST. LOUIS - Today, Comprehensive Health of Planned Parenthood Great Plains (PPGP) and Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region (RHS), asked the United States Supreme Court to protect access to safe, legal abortion for their patients in Missouri. For many years, medically unnecessary abortion restrictions resulted in the state having only one health center for patients to obtain safe, legal abortion. This is hardest on people who already face barriers to care including young people, women of color, those who live in rural areas, and people with low incomes.

A week ago, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals stayed a preliminary injunction that would have allowed PPGP and RHS to expand abortion services to three additional Missouri health centers. Building on *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, a federal judge blocked admitting privileges and ambulatory surgical center (ASC) requirements based on the undue burden these unconstitutional restrictions have had on thousands of Missouri women who are often forced to travel hundreds of miles or cross state lines to access an abortion.

Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region President and CEO Mary M. Kogut said:

"Countless medical experts have found these laws hurt women by putting safe, legal abortion out of reach. The Supreme Court upheld that position, and there is no reason for the court to continue to burden women in our state attempting to access a safe, legal abortion - one of the safest medical procedures performed in our country. The court is our last line of defense against politicians who continue to insert themselves between women and their doctors. We will continue to advocate to expand access to care on behalf of thousands of women in Missouri and elsewhere who count on us for expert care."

Planned Parenthood Great Plains Interim President and CEO Aaron Samulcek said:

“These laws were crafted by ideologically extreme politicians, not doctors. We all want to protect patient safety, and admitting privilege and ASC requirements do just the opposite. The Supreme Court has already ruled that similar laws in Texas are medically unnecessary and unconstitutional. These continued attacks against Missourians are categorically negligent when you consider the countless patients who simply cannot access safe, legal abortion in the state of Missouri. PPGP will do what it does best - fight to no end to ensure our patients can once again access safe, legal abortion when and where they need it.”

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Background

Today’s filing comes a little over a year since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down similar restrictions in Texas in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, finding that the laws provided no medical benefit and greatly burdened women – [forcing women to wait weeks for a procedure or cross state lines](#), if they could access abortion at all.

Leading medical experts like the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) oppose medically unnecessary restrictions like these because they bar access to safe medical care. According to the CDC, abortion has a more than 99% safety record. In those rare cases when complications do occur, they are similar to those that may occur from miscarriage, which ob-gyns and other physicians treat every day. Planned Parenthood works every day to make sure women receive high-quality health care in a safe, respectful environment. We have rigorous standards and training for staff as well as emergency plans in place because women’s safety is our first priority.

Timeline

- In 2016, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled medically unnecessary abortion restrictions in Texas like admitting privilege and ambulatory surgical center (ASC) requirements are unconstitutional.
- Similar restrictions were being enforced in the state of Missouri and created an undue burden for Missourians trying to access safe, legal abortion.
- Planned Parenthood Great Plains filed a lawsuit in federal district court challenging these two restrictions in November 2016.
- In April 2017, a federal district judge issued a preliminary injunction blocking Missouri's admitting privileges and ASC requirements, stating these medically unnecessary restrictions pose imminent harm toward Missouri women who need access to safe, legal abortion services.
- The state of Missouri sought an emergency stay of the preliminary injunction, but this stay was denied.
- The state of Missouri sought review en banc of the panel's decision not to issue the stay. The Eighth Circuit granted that motion.
- On September 15, the Eighth Circuit delivered a stay, suspending the preliminary injunction issued by the federal district court.
- Planned Parenthood is asking the Supreme Court to block the Eighth Circuit's stay, allowing the federal district court's preliminary injunction to remain in place while its case proceeds on appeal before the Circuit Court.

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