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Legal Voice & Planned Parenthood Challenge Idaho Law Restricting Qualified Medical Professionals from Providing Abortion Services

BOISE, Idaho – Today, reproductive health and rights advocates Legal Voice and Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands (PPGNHI) filed suit to challenge an antiquated Idaho law that unjustly restricts patient access to abortion services in the medically underserved state.

The lawsuit challenges Idaho’s Physician-Only Law that requires abortion care be performed solely by physicians, thus blocking qualified advanced practice clinicians (APCs)—such as physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and certified nurse midwives—from doing so.

Statement from Mary Stark, Family Nurse Practitioner, PPGNHI:

“This law limits my ability to provide my patients with the care they need and deserve. Many APCs – like me – have the knowledge, skills, and ability to provide safe abortions to patients in other states, but as soon as I cross the border into Idaho this law restricts me from providing that same care to my patients. 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. Every day across Idaho, APCs are providing care to their patients that is much more complex than an abortion. Many Idahoans choose to get their health care from an APC, but this law singles out one routine medical procedure with no serious medical justification. In a state where over 95% of counties lack an abortion provider, this is especially harmful to people trying to access care. At the end of the day, this isn’t a question of whether or not a trained APC can safely provide an abortion, it is about recognizing that this restriction is outdated, arbitrary, harmful to patients, and unnecessarily makes it harder for people to get a safe abortion in Idaho.”

Statement from Kim Clark, Senior Attorney, Legal Voice:

“Laws like Idaho’s Physician-Only Law were originally created in the wake of *Roe v. Wade* as a way to protect women seeking abortion care from unlicensed providers. But times have changed—and as medical best practices evolve, so must the laws that govern them. In effect, Idaho’s law serves only to harm Idahoans who can become pregnant by severely restricting their access to abortion care. It’s a medically unfounded law and a blatant violation of Idahoans’ constitutional rights. And, like many other restrictions on abortion care, it disproportionately harms those who already face systemic barriers to health care, including people of color, uninsured people, people with low incomes, and people living in rural areas. We are challenging this law to ensure all Idahoans have access to a full range of safe, effective, and affordable reproductive health care.”

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Currently, APCs in Idaho provide many health care services of equal or greater complexity than abortions. Indeed, APCs can and do care for pregnant patients experiencing miscarriages using identical medications and techniques as those used for early in-clinic abortion care, and go through extensive graduate training to be able to deliver that care in a high-quality, safe way.

Removing this medically unjustified restriction on APCs' scope of practice would dramatically reduce delays and the associated medical, emotional, and financial harm that women in Idaho are experiencing as a result of the Physician-Only Law.

The full complaint is available at [docs.legalvoice.org/PPGNHI v Idaho complaint.pdf](https://docs.legalvoice.org/PPGNHI_v_Idaho_complaint.pdf)

A backgrounder is available at [docs.legalvoice.org/PPGNHI v Idaho backgrounder.pdf](https://docs.legalvoice.org/PPGNHI_v_Idaho_backgrounder.pdf)

Plaintiffs PPGNHI and Mary Stark are represented by attorneys with Legal Voice, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, PPGNHI, and Stoel Rives.

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***Legal Voice** is a progressive feminist organization using the power of the law to make positive change for women, girls, and LGBTQ people in the Northwest. Legal Voice uses ground-breaking litigation, legislative advocacy, and community education to fight gender oppression and injustice. More at legalvoice.org.*

***Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands** is the region's leading sexual and reproductive health care provider and advocate. The organization operates 27 health centers in Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, and Western Washington and provides medical services and sexuality education for thousands of people each year. Planned Parenthood is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization and relies heavily on charitable donations to ensure our patients' ability to determine their own destinies and receive the health care they need.*