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Judge refuses to block Title X Rule in Maine, jeopardizing healthcare access for thousands of Mainers

Ruling will force Maine's family planning clinics eliminate key services, severely limiting healthcare options in many rural communities

(PRESS RELEASE)—U.S. District Court Judge Lance Walker today denied the Center for Reproductive Rights' request to block the Trump Administration's [Domestic Gag Rule](#) from going into effect in the state of Maine, jeopardizing the future of Maine Family Planning's clinics across the state.

In June 2019, on behalf of Maine Family Planning (MFP), the Center for Reproductive Rights made an [emergency request](#) to re-block the rule after a federal appeals court overrode lower court decisions that had previously blocked the rule from going into effect nationwide.

Maine Family Planning is the state's sole Title X grantee and the largest reproductive health care organization in Maine. With this ruling, 85% of abortion clinics in the state of Maine are in jeopardy.

"We are disappointed that the court did not recognize the harms that this will cause to people in Maine," **said Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights.** "But this isn't the end - we will keep fighting this gag rule to protect the family planning clinics and the many low income and rural communities where these clinics are the only healthcare option."

"For nearly 50 years, Maine Family Planning has played a critical role in the health of communities across the state, but with today's ruling the future of our clinics - and the lifesaving care we provide - is in jeopardy," **said George A. Hill, President and CEO of Maine Family Planning.** "This fight over our doctor's ability to provide medically-accurate information about reproductive healthcare options - including abortion access - to our patients has significant consequences for the women and men who rely on Maine Family Planning for care. We will keep fighting to overturn this rule so we can provide our patients with the care they deserve."

The Domestic Gag Rule will:

- Force healthcare providers that receive federal funding like MFP to stop performing abortions, even though no federal funds are used to finance abortion.
- Prohibit doctors at these facilities from making referrals to abortion providers, even when the patient has already decided to have an abortion and directly asks for a referral.
- Force doctors to give all pregnant patients prenatal referrals, even when the patient doesn't want one.
- Give Title X funding to non-medical organizations known as "crisis pregnancy centers", which are designed to look like medical clinics but aim to deter women from getting abortions.

The Title X program was created nearly 50 years ago to ensure low-income Americans can afford birth control and other reproductive healthcare. Each year, the Title X program provides approximately 4 million low-income patients nationwide with affordable birth control, STD testing and treatment, cancer screenings and more. In fact, 60% of women get their usual medical care from a Title X-supported healthcare center. In Maine, 23,800 low-income people receive Title X services every year.

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For decades, existing regulations have prevented federal funds, including Title X, from being used for abortion services. The Trump Administration's Domestic Gag Rule goes far beyond that, forcing clinics to stop performing abortions altogether, enact prohibitively expensive physical separation requirements or lose their funding for other services, which would put many out of business.

This case was filed by Emily Nestler, Molly Duane, and Arielle Humphries with the Center for Reproductive Rights, along with Emily Ullman and Jennifer Saperstein with Covington & Burling LLP, and Richard O'Meara with Murray Plumb & Murray.

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