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Planned Parenthood Affiliates in Missouri Win in Eighth Circuit

*Health centers in Columbia, Joplin, and Springfield will
resume efforts to expand abortion access.*

October 2, 2017

Overland Park – Today, Missouri Planned Parenthood affiliates applaud a ruling from the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals that will allow them to move forward in obtaining licenses to provide abortion services in more communities across the state. Comprehensive Health of Planned Parenthood Great Plains (PPGP) and Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood of St. Louis Region (RHS) are pleased the court denied the state of Missouri’s pending stay motion, which would have allowed the state of Missouri to enforce unconstitutional abortion restrictions pending an appeals process. Today’s decision means health centers in Columbia, Springfield, and Joplin can resume efforts to expand health care through abortion access for patients in need.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, has already clearly ruled admitting privileges and ambulatory surgical center (ASC) requirements are medically unnecessary and unconstitutional in Texas. These restrictions were virtually identical to those in Missouri, and contributed to the state having just one provider for nearly two years. There are currently two licensed abortion providers in Missouri – in Midtown Kansas City and St. Louis. Soon, Columbia, Springfield, and Joplin will also be providing services.

“Today’s win is a victory for Missouri women who rely on Planned Parenthood for expert, compassionate care, including abortion. The last thing that should stand in the way of their access to sexual and reproductive health care is an extreme politician who doesn’t know the first thing about health care delivery. We look forward to serving Missourians in more locations across the state and expanding access to safe, legal abortion,” Planned Parenthood Great Plains Interim President and CEO, Aaron Samulcek said.

“The court today denied a stay that would have blocked access to safe, legal abortion, as required by the Supreme Court’s precedent in *Whole Woman’s Health*,” said Mary M. Kogut, President and CEO of Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region. “By allowing us to continue

expanding health care access, this lets us ensure women in our state can get the care they need closer to their own community. We will continue working with the state to obtain licenses in Springfield and Joplin so we can provide care to patients in southwest Missouri as soon as possible.”

Background

In 2016, 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.

People in Missouri still face extreme hardships to access abortion – with the two health centers that provide abortions in St. Louis and Kansas City on the far east and west sides of the state, 250 miles apart. Women in areas like Springfield and Unionville still face a 300-mile round trip to Kansas City. This is on top of a forced 72 hour mandatory waiting period and required two trips as mandated by law. Planned Parenthood is doing everything in its power to expand access to care for people in the state. Read one Missouri woman’s personal account as told to [The Guardian](#).

Timeline

- In 2016, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled medically unnecessary abortion restrictions in Texas requiring local hospital admitting privilege and that abortions be provided in an ambulatory surgical centers (ASC) 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.
- Comprehensive Health of Planned Parenthood Great Plains and Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood of St. Louis Region (RHS) 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 issued a stay, suspending the preliminary injunction issued by the federal district court.
- Planned Parenthood asked the Supreme Court to vacate the Eighth Circuit's stay, allowing the federal district court's preliminary injunction to remain in place while the case proceeds on appeal before the Circuit Court. The Eighth Circuit filed a response explaining its stay was temporary while it considered the state's pending stay motion.
- On October 2nd, the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals denied the state's pending stay motion allowing the preliminary injunction to remain in place. The full case will proceed before the Circuit Court.

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