

ACLU, Center for Reproductive Rights, Planned Parenthood File Lawsuit Challenging Georgia Abortion Ban

Extreme Law Takes Direct Aim at the Right to Abortion Guaranteed
by *Roe v. Wade*

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ATLANTA— The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Georgia, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and Planned Parenthood filed a [lawsuit](#) today on behalf of plaintiffs, including doctors, health care providers, and their patients challenging Georgia’s abortion ban, set to take effect on January 1, 2020. The law bans abortion as early as six weeks into pregnancy, before many people even know they are pregnant.

“As a reproductive justice organization based in Georgia for over 20 years, SisterSong is committed to centering and amplifying the needs of those communities historically pushed to the margins. Georgia’s maternal mortality rate is the second highest in the nation and Black women in our state are dying at six times the national average. SisterSong is bringing this lawsuit to protect maternal health and reproductive rights so that every person – especially persons of color – can thrive in their families and communities as well as maintain their human right to make their own decisions about their reproductive lives,” said Monica Simpson, executive director of SisterSong.

“This legislation is blatantly unconstitutional under nearly 50 years of U.S. Supreme Court precedent. Politicians should never second guess women’s health care decisions,” said Sean J. Young, legal director of the ACLU of Georgia. “Politicians have no business telling women or a couple when to start or expand a family. Our lawsuit asks the court to block the law from taking effect on January 1, 2020.”

“Feminist Women’s Health Center has been providing comprehensive reproductive health services, including abortion care, to Georgians since 1976 and mobilizing in our communities since 1996. We are challenging this unconstitutional law because we are committed to serving our patients, and to a vision of Georgia where reproductive justice is fully realized for everyone. This clinic stays open,” said Kwajelyn J. Jackson, executive director of Feminist Women’s Health Center.

According to a recent Atlanta Journal-Constitution poll, [70 percent of Georgians support *Roe v. Wade*](#), the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that guaranteed the right to an abortion.

“Georgia is one of nine states that have passed abortion bans this year in the hopes of overturning *Roe v. Wade*,” said Nancy Northup, president and CEO at the Center for Reproductive Rights. “None of these laws are

in effect, and we are fighting to keep it that way. For nearly half a century, the Supreme Court has protected the right to abortion, and we know the majority of Americans continue to support abortion access.”

“This spring, Georgians came out in opposition to HB 481 like we’ve never seen before. As an abortion provider, as an educator, and as an advocate, Planned Parenthood vowed to fight this dangerous ban every step of the way. Today we take that next step. By filing this lawsuit, we are defending the rights of our patients and we are lifting up the voices of countless Georgians who were ignored this legislative session. Abortion is still safe, legal, and available in Georgia, and we plan to keep it that way,” said Staci Fox, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Southeast.

“In a state with a critical shortage of medical providers and some of the highest rates of maternal and infant deaths, especially among Black Georgians, politicians should focus on expanding access to reproductive care, not banning abortion before someone even knows they’re pregnant,” said Talcott Camp, deputy director of the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project.

The organizations bringing forward the lawsuit represent a wide-range of health providers, including SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, Feminist Women’s Health Center, Planned Parenthood Southeast, Inc., Atlanta Comprehensive Wellness Clinic, Atlanta Women’s Medical Center, FemHealth USA d/b/a carafem, Columbus Women’s Health Organization, P.C., Summit Medical Associates, P.C., Carrie Cwiak, M.D., M.P.H., Lisa Haddad, M.D., M.S., M.P.H., and Eva Lathrop, M.D., M.P.H.

The defendants in the case are Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, Attorney General Christopher M. Carr, Commissioner for the Department of Public Health Kathleen Toomey, the Executive Director and Members of the Georgia Composite Medical Board, and the District Attorneys for the counties where the plaintiffs provide medical care — all sued in their official capacities.

SisterSong v. Kemp was filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division.

Georgia is one of several states that have passed laws banning abortion this year, representing an unprecedented surge of legislation designed to initiate a direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade*.

Alabama passed a near-total ban; Kentucky, Mississippi, Louisiana, Ohio, and Georgia passed six-week bans; Missouri passed an eight-week ban; and Utah and Arkansas passed 18-week bans. None of these bans have gone into effect. Some have been temporarily blocked by a court and others are being challenged before the effective date. Abortion is still legal in all 50 states.

The ACLU has challenged similar abortion bans in Kentucky and Ohio, and a near total ban in Alabama, among other litigation. The Center for Reproductive Rights has challenged Mississippi’s six-week ban and 15-week ban, both of which have been blocked.

Click [here](#) to read the full complaint.

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