

DOJ Backs Nuns Caring for Dying Cancer Patients as New York Threatens Religious Freedom

For more than a century, the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne have done what many talk about but few actually do. They have cared for indigent cancer patients in their final days, offering comfort, dignity and compassion to those facing death.

Now, those same women are fighting to keep their ministry alive.

According to a Fox News report, the U.S. Department of Justice has thrown its support behind the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne as they challenge a New York law that they say would force them to violate their religious convictions regarding sex and gender.

The sisters operate Rosary Hill Home in Westchester County, where they provide free palliative care to terminal cancer patients. They argue that New York's transgender mandate would require them to recognize gender identity over biological sex, use preferred pronouns, permit access to sex-specific facilities based on gender identity and publicly affirm policies that conflict with Catholic teaching.

The consequences for refusing to comply are severe.

According to the lawsuit, the sisters face fines of up to \$2,000 per violation, increasing to \$5,000, court-ordered compliance measures, loss of their operating license and potential criminal penalties.

The Justice Department has made its position clear.

“States should take notice that they cannot require Americans to abandon their religious beliefs in the name of woke gender ideology,” Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon said in a statement.

Dhillon also defended the sisters’ longstanding ministry.

“For more than a century, the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne have provided free palliative care to indigent cancer patients in their last days,” she said. “New York’s law would force these religious women to choose between their faith and their license if they wish to continue serving the dying.”



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A Ministry With an Extraordinary Record

The lawsuit highlights a remarkable fact.

The sisters reported that during a four-year period between Feb. 1, 2022, and Jan. 31, 2026, the New York State Department of Health received “zero complaints” regarding their facility.

During that same period, the lawsuit notes, the state received “more than 55,000 complaints against other nursing homes.”

That contrast raises an obvious question.

Why is a ministry with a record of serving the vulnerable, caring for the dying and generating no complaints now facing the possibility of losing its license?

The sisters are not accused of abuse.

They are not accused of neglect.

They are not accused of mistreating patients.

Their conflict with the state centers on their refusal to embrace an ideology that contradicts their faith.

Religious Liberty on Trial

Martin Nussbaum, general counsel for the Catholic Benefits Association and counsel for the sisters, said the case reaches beyond a single nursing home.

“Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche’s formal certification of *Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne v. Hochul* as a case of ‘general public importance’ sends a welcome signal that a state’s policy preference for gender ideology does not trump the protection for religious freedom embedded in our country’s DNA,” Nussbaum said.

At its core, the case asks whether religious freedom remains meaningful when believers are told they may continue serving the public only if they abandon the convictions that motivated that service in the first place.

That question resonates far beyond a nursing home in New York.

Throughout Scripture, God’s people repeatedly faced demands to compromise deeply held convictions in order to satisfy governing authorities. The apostles answered such pressure with a simple declaration in Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.”

The Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne have spent generations caring for those who are often forgotten by society. Their legal battle is about more than licensing requirements and government regulations. It is about whether ministries built upon biblical convictions will remain free to serve without being compelled to deny the truths they believe God has revealed.

The outcome of this case will be watched closely by Christians across America because if women caring for dying cancer

patients can be forced to choose between their faith and their ministry, every faith-based institution should take notice.

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