

Media Set on Harassing These Maine Health Care Heroes

Liberty Counsel has filed a response in the U.S. District Court of Maine to oppose a motion to intervene by the media in *Jane Does 1–6, et al., v. Janet Mills, et al.* The media wants the court to require the public exposure of Liberty Counsel's clients. Their identities are known to the defendants, but the media wants to expose them to the public so that they will be harassed and threatened.

Liberty Counsel represent more than 2,000 Maine health care workers against Maine Gov. Janet Mills, health officials of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and five of the state's largest hospital systems. Mills ordered employers to deny all religious exemptions and ignore the federal employment law known as Title VII that affords employees the right to request reasonable accommodation for their sincere religious beliefs. Many of these health care workers who requested religious exemptions are now unemployed, having been terminated on Oct. 29, the governor's deadline for compliance. On Nov. 11, Liberty Counsel filed a petition asking the Supreme Court to review the full merits of the case.

However, the media is now seeking to expose the identities of these health care workers. In fact, media corporations waited until Nov. 10 to move to intervene which proves that their "alleged injury" is purely farce.

From the outset of the litigation, the complaint, pleadings, filings, proceedings and court orders have been open to the public, and the media was allowed access to all hearings. Yet, media corporations contend that allowing plaintiffs to proceed under pseudonyms "deprives" their "presumptive rights of access to court proceedings and records." However, the U.S.

District Court of Maine has already recognized that, "Plaintiffs have a reasonable fear of harm that outweighs the public's interest in open litigation at this preliminary stage."

In fact, these health care workers have encountered explicit threats to their persons, livelihoods and sincerely held religious beliefs in various media articles and stories. For example:

– "Anyway, Church Lady, what's this Constitution thingy people are referring to all the time?"

– "Anyway Church Lady, what's this lawsuit about again?"

– "Well one would have to wonder if the above is really true since both these deplorable 'Christian' sociopathic groups see no harm in placing innocents at risk of serious long term health problems or death."

– "These people turn my stomach! Somebody's fake religion has nothing to do with our health. Such a lawsuit shouldn't even be considered by the court. In fact, maybe as citizen, Americans ought to be suing the fools who put this lawsuit together."

– "The Liberty Counsel is the Christian American Taliban."

– "This dangerous and deadly public health matter presents an opportunity to further control those who look to [religion] for spiritual nourishment."

– "When your choice endangers everyone around you, you are a public threat, and should be incarcerated, just as you would be if you were firing a gun at random in a crowd."

The First Amendment guarantees the freedom of speech and press and prohibits the government from closing courtroom doors. Media corporations already have the qualified First Amendment access they seek. However, plaintiffs have the right to

privacy in legal proceedings to protect them from harassment.

Liberty Counsel founder and Chairman Mat Staver said, "The media wants the identities of our clients to be broadcast to the public so that they will be harassed and threatened into silence. These health care heroes have already been abused by Gov. Janet Mills. Now the media wants to abuse them. We will not allow that to happen." {eo}

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