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Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein Leads Cities' Opposition to Trump Administration's Medical Care Refusal Rule

Columbus files brief in two federal lawsuits objecting to new U.S. Health and Human Services rule that would allow healthcare staff to refuse medical treatment, even in emergencies, based on their personal religious or moral beliefs

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that dozens of cities across the country are joining [amicus curiae briefs](#) filed by Columbus this morning in support of two separate federal lawsuits opposing a controversial new U.S. Health and Human Services Department rule that some are calling the “Conscience Rule” but is better described as the “Refusal to Provide Care Rule.” Some 21 cities—ranging from Gary, IN and Holyoke, MA to Los Angeles, CA and Honolulu, HI—have signed onto the briefs that City Attorney Klein’s office wrote in conjunction with the City of Oakland, CA to support cases in California and the Southern District of New York.

On May 2, 2019, the U.S. Health and Human Services Department published a final rule that would allow health care staff to refuse to provide medical treatment to individuals based on the staff’s religious or personal beliefs, even in emergencies. The rule requires applicants for HHS funds to submit an assurance and certification of full compliance as a condition of receiving federal financial assistance or any federal funds from the department.

There are already basic religious protections built into federal law, which are respectful of religious and moral beliefs, but do not put patients’ lives at risk.

“Once again, we are compelled to act against a disturbing abuse of power by the Trump Administration—this time allowing healthcare providers to deny patients medical care based on the staff’s religious or personal beliefs, even in emergencies,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“This new rule would allow the denial of care to LGBTQ individuals, a person seeking reproductive healthcare, those struggling with substance abuse, and more. Local governments often serve as the healthcare provider for our most vulnerable populations, and if we are faced with the choice of allowing discrimination against our residents or losing critical healthcare funding, cities and counties will be the ones left holding the bag.”**

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