

No. 19-35386(L)

**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT**

STATE OF OREGON, et al.,

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

v.

ALEX M. AZAR II, in his Official Capacity as Secretary of the U.S.
Department of Health & Human Services, et al.,

Defendants-Appellants.

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION et al.,

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

v.

ALEX M. AZAR II, in his Official Capacity as Secretary of the U.S.
Department of Health & Human Services, et al.,

Defendants-Appellants.

On Appeal from the United States District Court for the
District of Oregon

**UNOPPOSED MOTION FOR LEAVE TO FILE BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE*
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS,
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS, CALIFORNIA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION,
SOCIETY FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND MEDICINE, AND
SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE IN SUPPORT OF
PLAINTIFFS-APPELLEES' EMERGENCY MOTION FOR
RECONSIDERATION *EN BANC***

1. Pursuant to Rule 29 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (“ACOG”), the American Academy of Pediatrics (“AAP”), the California Medical Association (“CMA”), the American Academy of Family Physicians (“AAFP”), the Society for Adolescent

Health and Medicine (“SAHM”), and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (“SMFM”) (collectively, “*Amici*”) respectfully move for leave to file an *amicus curiae* brief in support of Plaintiffs-Appellees’ Emergency Motion For Reconsideration *En Banc*. Counsel for all parties have consented to the filing of an *amicus* brief. However, because neither the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure nor this Court’s Rules expressly address the filing of an *amicus* brief in connection with an emergency motion for reconsideration *en banc*, out of an abundance of caution and a desire to be fully compliant with the Court’s expectations, *Amici* also file this motion to respectfully request the Court’s leave to file the attached *amicus* brief. *Amici* state as follows:

2. *Amici* are leading health professional organizations that share the common goal of improving health for all by, among other things, ensuring access to high-quality healthcare that is comprehensive and evidence-based.

3. *Amici* are gravely concerned about the real-life implications of the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) regulation, entitled “Compliance with Statutory Program Integrity Requirements” (the “Final Rule”), which adopts a view of patient counseling that is contrary to well-established principles of medical practice and ethics. *Amici* have a strong interest in the disposition of this case because the Final Rule places medical providers in a

precarious and ethically compromised position by forcing them to subvert the needs of their patients to the directives of the Final Rule.

4. *Amici* seek leave to file the proposed *amicus* brief, attached to this motion, to provide the Court with their unique perspective as health professional organizations. Courts, including the United States Supreme Court, frequently rely on submissions by *Amici* as authoritative sources of medical information on issues concerning reproductive healthcare.¹

5. The proposed *amicus* brief will assist the Court in evaluating the Motions Panel's decision. Its decision is premised on Appellants' understanding of "counseling" that is inconsistent with the medical understanding of the term and with daily medical practice. It also adopts Appellants' characterization of "nondirective

¹ See, e.g., *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, [136 S. Ct. 2292, 2312, 2315](#) (2016) (citing *amicus* brief submitted by ACOG, AAP and other health professional organizations in reviewing clinical and privileging requirements); *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, [573 U.S. 682, 761](#) (2014) (Ginsburg, J. dissenting) (citing *amicus* brief submitted by ACOG and other health professional organizations in its discussion of how contraceptive coverage helps safeguard the health of women for whom pregnancy may be hazardous); *Stenberg v. Carhart*, [530 U.S. 914, 932–36](#) (2000) (quoting ACOG's *amicus* brief extensively and referring to ACOG as among the "significant medical authority" supporting the comparative safety of the healthcare procedure at issue); *Planned Parenthood Ariz., Inc. v. Humble*, [753 F.3d 905, 916–17](#) (9th Cir. 2014) (citing brief submitted by amici ACOG and other medical organizations in further support of a particular medical regimen), *cert. denied*, [135 S. Ct. 870, 190](#) (2014); *Stuart v. Camnitz*, [774 F.3d 238, 251–52, 254–55](#) (4th Cir. 2014) (citing ACOG's *amicus* brief and committee opinion in its discussion of informed consent); *Planned Parenthood of Wis., Inc. v. Van Hollen*, [738 F.3d 786, 790](#) (7th Cir. 2013) (citing ACOG's *amicus* brief in evaluating the relative safety of abortion and other outpatient procedures); *Greenville Women's Clinic v. Bryant*, [222 F.3d 157, 168](#) (4th Cir. 2000) (extensively discussing ACOG's guidelines and describing those guidelines as "commonly used and relied upon by obstetricians and gynecologists nationwide to determine the standard and the appropriate level of care for their patients").

pregnancy counseling” that is inconsistent with both the medical understanding of the term and medical ethics. *Amici* are leading authorities on reproductive health care, family planning services, and rules of ethical conduct for medical professionals, and can provide the collective judgment of physicians as to the established understanding of this term in the medical field. Further, well-established and evidence-based standards of health care services recommend nondirective pregnancy counseling as an essential component of health care. *Amici* are directly involved in the provision of healthcare and, as such, have unique insight into the critical importance of this care, as well as the risks posed by restrictions on providers’ ability to provide such care. Given their specialized knowledge and perspective, *Amici* believe that their brief will be helpful to the Court as it considers the emergency motion for reconsideration *en banc*.

6. As noted above, although all parties consented to the filing of an *amicus* brief, *amici* file this motion out of an abundance of caution because neither the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure nor this Court’s Rules expressly address the filing of an *amicus* brief in connection with an emergency motion for reconsideration *en banc*.

7. *Amici* also respectfully request the Court’s leave to file a brief no longer than 4,200 words, because the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure are unclear as to the permitted length of an *amicus* brief under these circumstances, and because

Amici believe that a 4,200 word brief is warranted in light of the importance of the issues presented.

Date: June 25, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

Ropes & Gray LLP

/s/ Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
ROPES & GRAY LLP
2099 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006
202-508-4600
douglas.hallward-driemeier@ropesgray.com

*Counsel to the American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists,
American Academy of Pediatrics,
American Academy of Family Physicians,
California Medical Association,
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine,
and Society For Maternal-Fetal Medicine
as Amici Curiae*

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

I hereby certify that the foregoing Motion complies with the type-volume limitation of Circuit Rule 27-1(d), in that, as per Circuit Rule 32-3, the word count of this brief divided by 280 does not exceed the designated page limit. Furthermore, this Motion complies with the typeface and the type style requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 27 because this brief has been prepared using Word 14-point Times New Roman typeface.

Dated: June 25, 2019

Ropes & Gray LLP

/s/ Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
Douglas Hallward-Driemeier

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

On June 25, 2019, the undersigned caused the foregoing document to be filed electronically by using the Court's CM/ECF system. All parties are represented by registered CM/ECF users and will be served by the appellate CM/ECF system.

Dated: June 25, 2019

Ropes & Gray LLP

/s/ Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
Douglas Hallward-Driemeier

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MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, SOCIETY FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH
AND MEDICINE, AND SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE
IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS-APPELLEES' EMERGENCY MOTION
FOR RECONSIDERATION *EN BANC***

Thomas N. Bulleit
Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
ROPES & GRAY LLP
2099 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 508-4600
tom.bulleit@ropesgray.com
douglas.hallward-driemeier
@ropesgray.com

Lisa H. Bebchick
ROPES & GRAY LLP
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036-8704
(212) 596-9000
lisa.bebchick@ropesgray.com

Attorneys for Amici Curiae

(SEE SIGNATURE BLOCK FOR FULL LIST OF ATTORNEYS)

CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Pursuant to Rule 26.1 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, *amici curiae* state that they are non-profit organizations, with no parent corporations or publicly traded stock, and no publicly held company has 10% or greater ownership in *amici*.

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INTERESTS OF *AMICI CURIAE*¹

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (“ACOG”), the American Academy of Pediatrics (“AAP”), the California Medical Association (“CMA”), the American Academy of Family Physicians (“AAFP”), the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (“SAHM”), and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (“SMFM”) (collectively, “*Amici*”) submit this *amici curiae* brief in support of Plaintiffs-Appellees. *Amici* share the common goal of ensuring access to high-quality reproductive health care that is comprehensive, ethical, and evidence-based.

ACOG is the nation’s leading group of physicians providing health care for women. With more than 58,000 members—representing more than 90% of all obstetrician–gynecologists in the United States—ACOG advocates for quality health care for women, maintains the highest standards of clinical practice and continuing education of its members, promotes patient education, and increases awareness among its members and the public of the changing issues facing women’s health care. ACOG members care for women of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including low-income women and adolescents who rely on Title X funded projects

¹ All parties consented to the filing of this *amicus* brief. No party’s counsel in this case authored this brief in whole or in part. No party or party’s counsel contributed any money intended to fund preparing or submitting this brief. No person, other than *amici*, their members, or their counsel contributed money that was intended to fund preparing or submitting this brief.

for their care. ACOG has previously appeared as *amicus curiae* in various courts throughout the country and its work has been cited by numerous courts seeking authoritative medical data regarding childbirth and abortion.

AAP is a non-profit professional organization founded in 1930 dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. Its membership is comprised of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists. AAP has become a powerful voice for child and adolescent health through education, research, advocacy, and the provision of expert advice. AAP has worked with the federal and state governments, health care providers, and parents on behalf of America's families to ensure the availability of safe and effective reproductive health services.

AAFP is the national medical specialty society representing family physicians. Founded in 1947, its 134,600 members are physicians and medical students from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Uniformed Services of the United States. AAFP seeks to improve the health of patients, families, and communities by advocating for the health of the public and serving the needs of its members with professionalism and creativity.

CMA is a non-profit, incorporated professional association for physicians with more than 44,000 members throughout the State of California. For more than 150 years, CMA has promoted the science and art of medicine, the care and well-

being of patients, the protection of public health, and the betterment of the medical profession. CMA's physician members practice in all specialties and settings, including providing comprehensive family planning and reproductive health services.

SAHM, founded in 1968, is a non-profit multidisciplinary professional society committed to the promotion of health, well-being, and equity for all adolescents and young adults by supporting adolescent health and medicine professionals through the advancement of clinical practice, care delivery, research, advocacy, and professional development. It strives to empower its 1,200 members who are professionals and trainees in medicine, nursing, research, psychology, public health, social work, nutrition, education, and law. SAHM advocates on behalf of all adolescents and young adults both on federal and state government levels for the availability of safe and effective reproductive health services.

SMFM, founded in 1977, is the medical professional society for obstetricians who have additional training in the area of high-risk, complicated pregnancies. Representing over 4,000 members, SMFM supports the clinical practice of maternal-fetal medicine by providing education, promoting research, and engaging in advocacy to reduce disparities and optimize the health of high-risk pregnant women and their babies. SMFM and its members are dedicated to ensuring that medically appropriate treatment options are available. SMFM has advocated at the state and

federal level to ensure that high-risk women have access to high-quality, preventive health care and family planning services.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Amici are leading medical societies whose policies represent the collective judgment of the physicians and other medical providers in the United States. *Amici* respectfully submit this brief in support of Plaintiffs-Appellees' emergency motion for reconsideration *en banc* of the Motions Panel's June 20, 2019 Per Curiam Order in *Oregon v. Azar* ("Order").² Plaintiffs-Appellees have thoroughly briefed why the Court should review the Order staying the injunction of the Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS") regulation, entitled "Compliance with Statutory Program Integrity Requirements" (the "Final Rule"), pending appeal. *Amici* write to express the medical community's grave concerns regarding the Order and the imposition of the Final Rule prior to appeal.

The Order adopts a fundamentally misguided view of patient counseling that is contrary to well-established principles of medical practice and ethics for at least two key reasons. *First*, the Order incorrectly assumes that referral is not part of counseling.³ As commonly understood by medical practitioners and in daily medical

² Order on Motions for Stay Pending Appeal, No. 19-35386 (9th Cir. Jun. 20, 2019) (per curiam).

³ Order at 18.

practice, counseling patients may include and, in some cases, must include, providing referrals. Well-established medical ethical principles not only recognize referrals as part of counseling, but impose obligations on practitioners to provide patients with appropriate and necessary health care, including information about their treatment options and referrals. *Second*, the Order incorrectly concludes that a mandated referral to prenatal counseling for a patient expressing a desire to terminate her pregnancy is not “directive.”⁴ This finding is flawed. It twists the meaning of non-directive counseling and ignores clear principles of medical ethics.

Far from constituting what the Order describes as “comparatively minor”⁵ harm, the Final Rule places medical providers in a precarious and ethically compromised position by forcing them to subvert the needs of their patients to the directives of the Final Rule. *Amici* believe that *en banc* review is necessary to prevent harm to people who depend on Title X clinics for critical reproductive health care. In the absence of an injunction, patient care will be severely compromised and some providers will stop providing care altogether, given the Rule’s ethically infirm directives. The result will be devastating to the particularly vulnerable patient populations who rely on Title X for health care.

⁴ *Id.* at 19.

⁵ *Id.* at 24.

ARGUMENT

I. *En Banc* Review Should Be Granted Because the Order Adopts a Flawed Understanding of Patient Counseling that Is Contrary to Well-Established Principles of Medical Practice and Ethics

A. The Order Incorrectly Assumes that Referral Is Not Part of Counseling

Amici disagree with the Panel and HHS’s construction of the statutory provision that requires “all pregnancy counseling shall be nondirective,” which has been legislated by Congress in each HHS appropriations act since 1996.⁶ The Panel found that “providing a referral is not ‘counseling.’” The assumption underlying the Panel’s decision—that counseling and referral are distinct—is fundamentally at odds with medical guidance for clinical practice and longstanding principles of medical ethics.

1. The Order Is at Odds with Well-Established Guidance for Clinical Practice

Guidance for counseling patients, published by leading authorities on the provision of health care and routinely referenced by clinicians in a range of medical specialties, recognizes that referrals are an integral part of patient counseling.

Counseling throughout the medical field is understood to encompass necessary referrals. For example, consistent with medical ethics, a patient diagnosed

⁶ Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, Pub. L. No. 115-245, [132 Stat. 2981](#), [3070–71](#) (2018); *see also*, *e.g.*, Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-134, [110 Stat. 1321](#), [1321–22](#) (1996).

with a genetic susceptibility to cancer should be offered counseling, including referral to a specialist.⁷ Proper counseling of a patient diagnosed with diabetes should include a referral to a registered dietician nutritionist.⁸ In all areas of medicine, appropriate referrals are an inextricable part of the counseling relationship between a patient and his or her care provider. Indeed, delay or failure to refer a patient for appropriate treatment is a common ground for medical malpractice claims.⁹ The need for a referral and an understanding of what may be appropriate treatment for a particular patient is part and parcel of patient counseling, and the Order's divergent conclusion is inconsistent with basic principles of medical practice and guidance.

In the reproductive health context, counseling patients in any number of situations may require referral. In the context of contraception counseling, for example, a clinician counseling a patient may find it necessary to refer the patient to

⁷ ACOG, Comm. on Ethics and Comm. on Genetics, *Opinion No. 410: Ethical Issues in Genetic Testing* 111 OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY 1495, 1495 (2008; reaffirmed 2014) (the patient “should be offered counseling and follow-up, with referral as appropriate, to ensure delivery of care consistent with current standards”).

⁸ Eileen Stellefson Myers, *Nutrition Counseling for Patients with Prediabetes or Diabetes*, PHARMACY TIMES (Oct. 27, 2016).

⁹ Xiao Xu et al., *The Effect of Medical Malpractice Liability on Rate of Referrals Received by Specialist Physicians*, 8 HEALTH ECON. POL'Y LAW 453, 454 (2013) (“failure or delay in referral are among the reasons most cited for medical negligence claims in the United States”).

another provider for care. This is also the case in the context of counseling regarding fertility, pregnancy, and pregnancy health conditions, among others.

Indeed, clinical guidance on counseling instructs clinicians to refer patients when necessary, illustrating that referral is an integral part of patient counseling. As AAP plainly states, “*Counseling includes . . . referring the adolescent to appropriate resources and services.*”¹⁰ See also, e.g., Katherine E. Simmonds & Frances E. Likis, *Providing Options Counseling for Women with Unintended Pregnancies*, 34 J. OBSTETRIC, GYNECOLOGIC, & NEONATAL NURSING 373, 375 (2005) (“comprehensive, respectful pregnancy options counseling . . . may require *that the nurse refer patients* to a colleague or to a different setting entirely”);¹¹ ACOG, Comm. on Adolescent Health Care, *Opinion No. 710: Counseling Adolescents About Contraception*, 123 OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY 389, 392 (2017) (“[o]bstetrician–gynecologists have the *duty to refer* patients in a timely manner to other health care providers if they do not feel that they can provide the standard reproductive services that their patients request”); ACOG, *Position Statement: Counseling Patients with Zika Infection* (2016) (when counseling a pregnant patient diagnosed with the Zika virus, which causes an increased likelihood of life-threatening birth defects, a

¹⁰ Laurie L. Hornberger & AAP Comm. on Adolescence, *Options Counseling for the Pregnant Adolescent Patient* 140 PEDIATRICS 1, 1 (2017) (emphasis added).

¹¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all emphasis is added.

physician must be prepared to refer patients to abortion care). Put plainly, in the reproductive counseling context, clinicians understand, and good clinical practice dictates, that counseling includes referrals. The Order’s view of the two as separate is inconsistent with reality and clinical guidance.

2. The Order Is at Odds with Established Principles of Medical Ethics

Leading authorities on medical ethics and rules of ethical conduct for medical professionals, such as the AMA’s Code of Medical Ethics and ACOG’s Code of Professional Ethics, codify medical providers’ ethical duties and unequivocally state that providers have a duty to refer when appropriate.¹² ACOG’s Code of Professional Ethics states that providers have an ethical duty, to both the patient and to the medical community, to “exercise all reasonable means to ensure that the most appropriate care is provided to the patient,” including by “refer[ring]” a patient to “other physicians, health care professionals, and institutions to the extent necessary to serve the best interests of their patients.”¹³ Similarly, the AMA Code of Medical Ethics states that “[a] physician shall . . . make relevant information available to patients . . . obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals

¹² AMA’s Code states its principles are “standards of conduct that define the essentials of honorable behavior for the physician.” AMA, CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS: PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL ETHICS 1 (2016). Noncompliance with ACOG’s Code of Professional Ethics “may affect an individual’s initial or continuing Fellowship in [ACOG].” ACOG, CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS 1 (2018).

¹³ ACOG, CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, *supra* note 12, at 2–3.

when indicated.”¹⁴ ACOG’s Committee Opinions also routinely require physicians to make appropriate referrals.¹⁵ These medical authorities confirm the ethical duty to refer patients is an integral component of patient counseling.

This ethical duty to make appropriate and timely referrals is part of medical providers’ broader ethical duties to ensure a patient’s welfare, respect patient autonomy, provide a patient with truthful information sufficient for informed consent, and do no harm. As the AMA has affirmed, “referring patients to other professionals to provide care” is part of a physician’s obligation to promote patients’ best interests and wellbeing.¹⁶ In other words, when a referral would serve a patient’s best interests, that referral is a required component of the patient-physician relationship. The duty to refer also stems from the duty to provide patients with

¹⁴ AMA, CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS, *supra* note 12, at 1.

¹⁵ See ACOG, Comm. on Ethics, *Opinion No. 439: Informed Consent*, 114 OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY 401, 407 (2009; reaffirmed 2015) (“[P]hysicians must . . . make appropriate referrals.”); ACOG, Comm. on Ethics, *Opinion No. 528: Adoption*, 119 OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY 1320, 1322 (2012; reaffirmed 2018) (“Physicians often may best fulfill their obligations to patients through referral to other professionals who have the appropriate skills and expertise.”); ACOG, Comm. on Ethics, *Opinion No. 385: The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine*, 110 OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY 1203, 1203 (2007; reaffirmed 2016) (describing “duty to refer patients in a timely manner to other providers if [providers] do not feel that they can in conscience provide the standard reproductive services that their patients requests”). See also Kinsey Hasstedt, *Unbiased Information on and Referral for All Pregnancy Options Are Essential to Informed Consent in Reproductive Health Care*, 21 GUTTMACHER POL’Y REV. 1, 1 (2018) (“The guidelines of a number of leading professional medical organizations specifically address the need for comprehensive, unbiased information on and referral for all of a woman’s pregnancy options—parenting, adoption or abortion—as a fundamental component of a patient’s right to self-determination.”).

¹⁶ AMA, CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS OPINION 1.2.3 (2016).

information sufficient for informed consent, as patients may need to be referred to another provider to obtain complete information about all relevant options.¹⁷ For these reasons, a provider’s duty to refer is part of bedrock medical ethical principles. Because clinicians cannot separate their duty to refer from their provision of counseling, the Court should grant *en banc* review to reexamine the Order’s finding that referral is separate from counseling.

B. The Order Incorrectly Finds that Mandated Referral to Prenatal Health Care for Patients Seeking to Terminate a Pregnancy Is “Nondirective”

The Order is premised on a flawed finding that “it is not clear that referring a patient to a non-abortion doctor is necessarily ‘directive’”—even when a patient specifically seeks an abortion. The essential feature of *nondirective* pregnancy counseling, as required by Congress, is that it is necessarily *patient-directed*. Nondirective counseling thus requires that the patient be fully informed about the appropriate courses of care relevant to the patient’s particular situation and expressed needs.¹⁸

¹⁷ AAP, Comm. on Bioethics, *Policy Statement—Physician Refusal to Provide Information or Treatment on the Basis of Claims of Conscience*, 124 PEDIATRICS 1689, 1689 (2009) (“As part of informed consent, physicians also have a duty to inform their patients of all relevant and legally available treatment options, including options to which they object. They have a moral obligation to refer patients to other health care professionals who are willing to provide those services when failing to do so would cause harm to the patient.”).

¹⁸ See, e.g., Hasstedt, *supra* note 15, at 1; ACOG, GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH CARE: A RESOURCE MANUAL 345, 719 (4th ed. 2014).

Nondirective counseling is tailored to the patient’s expressed needs. In cases where a pregnant patient is ambivalent about her pregnancy, nondirective counseling requires that she be informed in a balanced manner about all pregnancy options that are relevant to her expressed needs.¹⁹ This may require that a provider inform a patient “about all options, including raising the child herself, placing the child for adoption, and abortion.”²⁰ Such nondirective pregnancy counseling accords with a provider’s ethical duties to maintain a trusting patient-physician relationship and obtain informed consent.²¹ In situations where a pregnant patient intends to carry her pregnancy to term, she should be provided information about how to promote a healthy pregnancy and referred for prenatal care. In situations where a patient desires to terminate her pregnancy, she should be provided information about abortion and referred for care consistent with her expressed wishes. Contrary to the statutory mandate of nondirective counseling, the Final Rule’s requirement that a clinician refer a patient who is *not* seeking to carry a pregnancy to term for prenatal

¹⁹ Hasstedt, *supra* note 185, at 1 (physician should provide “complete, medically accurate, and unbiased information and resources for all [of a patient’s] pregnancy options.”).

²⁰ ACOG, GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH CARE, *supra* note 18, at 719; ACOG, CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, *supra* note 12, at 2.

²¹ ACOG, CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, *supra* note 12, at 2 (a provider should serve as the “patient’s advocate” and “exercise all reasonable means to ensure the most appropriate care is provided to the patient.”).

care requires that the clinician *direct* the patient to a course of treatment.²² Similarly, the Final Rule’s restrictions on providing abortion counseling or clear referrals to abortion providers are directive.

As understood by the medical community, nondirective pregnancy counseling enables patient choice through the provision of information tailored to the patient’s expressed needs and conditions. It is unethical for medical professionals to provide therapies that are medically unnecessary and of no benefit to the patient; a patient should only be referred to a health care professional who will be able to provide the services the patient seeks or requires.²³ Prenatal care is not medically indicated when a patient plans to terminate her pregnancy—it is recommended only when a patient plans to continue her pregnancy.²⁴

The Final Rule’s requirement that a pregnant patient in all cases “*shall be*” referred to prenatal care, and may be provided with only limited abortion counseling,

²² Order at 19; Compliance with Statutory Program Integrity Requirements, 84 Fed. Reg. 7714, 7789 (Mar. 4, 2019) (to be codified at [42 C.F.R. § 59.14\(b\)\(1\)](#)) (“once a client served by a Title X project is medically verified as pregnant, she *shall be* referred to a health care provider for medically necessary prenatal health care”).

²³ ACOG, *Informed Consent*, *supra* note 15, at 7; AMA, CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS OPINION 1.2.3, *supra* note 16.

²⁴ *See, e.g.*, Ewing Decl., ER55 ¶ 43 (“Prenatal care is not medically necessary for a woman who has decided to terminate her pregnancy; for such a woman, an abortion is the ‘medically necessary’ treatment.”); ACOG, *FAQ 168: Pregnancy Choices: Raising the Baby, Adoption, and Abortion* (2013) (“If you choose to raise the baby or give the baby up for adoption, it is best to begin prenatal care as soon as you can.”).

regardless of the patient’s wishes, is not “nondirective.”²⁵ If a pregnant patient walks into a medical clinic and informs her provider that she is considering obtaining an abortion, she trusts that her provider will give her objective, balanced information. Under the Final Rule, however, the patient will instead be referred to prenatal care.²⁶ When the patient expressly asks for a referral for an abortion, the Final Rule allows the provider to give a list of referrals, but the majority of providers on this list cannot provide abortions, and neither the list nor the provider can delineate which of the providers on that list, if any, actually offer the needed care.²⁷ The provider is thus prevented from giving the patient full information about appropriate courses of treatment. This is directive care based on the *government’s directive*: regardless of the patient’s interests, she will not be given the information she seeks, and instead will be referred to prenatal care.²⁸ This is precisely what Congress prohibited.

²⁵ 84 Fed. Reg. at 7788–89 (to be codified at [42 C.F.R. §§ 59.14\(a\), 59.14\(b\)\(1\)](#)); Hasstedt, *supra* note 15, at 1; ACOG, GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH CARE, *supra* note 18, at 719.

²⁶ *See, e.g.*, 84 Fed. Reg. at 7730, 7748.

²⁷ *Id.* at 7789 (to be codified at [42 C.F.R. §§ 59.14\(c\)\(2\), 59.14\(e\)\(3\)](#)).

²⁸ AMA, CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS OPINION 2.1.1 (2016) (clinicians should “present relevant information accurately and sensitively, in keeping with the patient’s preferences”).

C. *En Banc* Review Is Necessary Because the Stay Will Cause Irreparable Harm

Every federal district court judge to consider the Final Rule found that it was likely to violate the law and that the harm was sufficiently grave to warrant a preliminary injunction. Yet, in determining whether a stay would cause irreparable harm, the Panel found that “these potential harms obviously rely on crediting Plaintiffs’ predictions about the effect of implementing the Final Rule” and deferred instead to HHS’s opposite prediction.²⁹ *Amici*, as medical practitioners, write to explain that HHS’s unsupported speculation about the effects of the Final Rule is inconsistent with the existing medical landscape. Real-world experience confirms that the Final Rule will cause an immediate and steep decline both in the number of Title X providers and the quality of care they can provide. The Court should grant *en banc* review given the nature and magnitude of the immediate harm if the stay were to remain in effect.

First, as described *supra*, the Final Rule’s restrictions contravene medical ethics and best practices. When a regulation imposes significant constraints on a medical provider’s ability to provide continued quality care for his or her patients, irreparable harm has been demonstrated sufficient to justify a preliminary

²⁹ Order at 25.

injunction.³⁰ Here, the Final Rule’s restrictions on providers’ ability to provide care consistent with best practices and ethical norms warrant *en banc* review.

Second, the Final Rule will undermine the patient-provider relationship, which is the cornerstone of ethical medical practice. The Final Rule’s restrictions on doctors’ communication will likely undermine patients’ trust, making patients less likely to turn to medical professionals for other critical care, such as timely cancer screenings or obtaining effective contraceptive care.³¹

Third, if the stay remains in effect, it will exacerbate the ongoing shortage of providers of necessary medical care. Currently, there is a nationwide shortage of obstetrician-gynecologists.³² This trend is expected to worsen: leading groups predict that by 2030 there will be an 18% nationwide shortage of obstetrician-

³⁰ See *Fairfield Cty. Med. Ass’n v. United Healthcare of New England*, 985 F. Supp. 2d 262, 271–72 (D. Conn. 2013), *aff’d as modified sub nom. Fairfield Cty. Med. Ass’n v. United Healthcare of New England, Inc.*, 557 F. App’x 53 (2d Cir. 2014) (finding irreparable injury to physicians where they would suffer “disruption of their relationships with their . . . patients” and noting “several district and circuit courts have found that disruption of the physician-patient relationship can cause irreparable harm . . . particularly when the patient belongs to a vulnerable class”); *State of N.Y. v. Schweiker*, 557 F. Supp. 354, 360 (S.D.N.Y. 1983) (HHS regulation requiring physicians to disclose adolescent health information to patients’ parents was an irreparable harm because it would deter patients from seeking care and cause physicians to breach their ethical duty to maintain patient confidentiality”).

³¹ ACOG, Comm. on Health Care for Underserved Women, *Opinion No. 615: Access to Contraception*, 125 OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY 250, 251 (2015; reaffirmed 2017); ACOG, Comm. on Adolescent Health Care, *Opinion No. 699: Adolescent Pregnancy, Contraception, and Sexual Activity*, 129 OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY 142, 143, 146 (2017).

³² See WILLIAM F. RAYBURN, ACOG, THE OBSTETRICIAN-GYNECOLOGIST WORKFORCE IN THE UNITED STATES 4, 121 (2017) (half of the counties in the United States already do not have any obstetrician-gynecologists).

gynecologists,³³ and a shortfall of as many as 49,300 primary care physicians and 72,700 non-primary care physicians.³⁴ If the stay stands and practitioners are forced to forego Title X funds in order to comply with medical best practices and ethical duties, this shortage will only worsen. This will cause a clear harm to patients who rely on Title X. Title X is the only federal grant program dedicated exclusively to providing low-income patients with essential family planning and preventive health services and information.³⁵ Title X provides necessary services, including well-woman exams, breast and cervical cancer screenings, FDA-approved contraceptive methods and counseling services, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, testing for HIV, pregnancy testing and counseling, and other patient education and/or health referrals.³⁶

Contrary to the Order, the harmful impacts of the Final Rule will affect millions of lives.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ TIM DALL ET AL., COMPLEXITIES OF PHYSICIAN SUPPLY AND DEMAND: PROJECTIONS FROM 2016 TO 2030 at v (2018).

³⁵ CHRISTINA FOWLER ET AL., OFFICE OF POPULATION AFFAIRS, TITLE X FAMILY PLANNING ANNUAL REPORT: 2017 NATIONAL SUMMARY at ES-1 (Aug. 2018).

³⁶ *Id.*

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, *amici* respectfully request that this Court grant Plaintiffs-Appellees' emergency motion for reconsideration *en banc*.

(Signature page follows)

Date: June 25, 2019

Ropes & Gray LLP

Lisa H. Bebchick
Catherine J. Djang
Amy W. Malone
ROPES & GRAY LLP
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036-8704
(212) 596-9000
lisa.bebchick@ropesgray.com
catherine.djang@ropesgray.com
amy.malone@ropesgray.com

Daniel W. Richards
ROPES & GRAY LLP
1900 University Avenue, 6th Floor
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
(650) 617-4000
daniel.richards@ropesgray.com

Nadia Dahab
STOLL BERNE
209 SW Oak Street, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 227-1600
ndahab@stollberne.com

*Counsel to the American College
of Obstetricians and Gynecologists,
American Academy of Pediatrics,
American Academy of Family
Physicians,
California Medical Association,
Society for Adolescent Health and
Medicine, and Society for Maternal-
Fetal Medicine
as Amici Curiae*

/s/ Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
Thomas N. Bulleit
Andrew J. Sutton
ROPES & GRAY LLP
2099 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 508-4600
douglas.hallward-driemeier@ropesgray.com
tom.bulleit@ropesgray.com
andrew.sutton@ropesgray.com

Haley Eagon
ROPES & GRAY LLP
Prudential Tower
800 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02199-3600
(617) 951-7000
haley.eagon@ropesgray.com

Taylor Washburn
LANE POWELL PC
1420 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4200
Seattle, WA 98101-2375
(206) 223-7000
washburnt@lanepowell.com

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to Fed. R. App. P. 29 and Circuit Rule 29-2, I certify that:

This brief complies with the type-volume limitation of Circuit Rule 29-2(c)(2) because this brief contains 4,184 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Fed. R. App. P. 32(f).

This brief complies with the typeface requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(6) because this brief has been prepared in a proportionately spaced typeface using Microsoft Word 2016 Times New Roman 14-point font.

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Ropes & Gray LLP

/s/ Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
Douglas Hallward-Driemeier

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

On June 25, 2019, the undersigned caused the foregoing document to be filed electronically by using the Court's CM/ECF system. All parties are represented by registered CM/ECF users and will be served by the appellate CM/ECF system.

Ropes & Gray LLP

/s/ Douglas Hallward-Driemeier
Douglas Hallward-Driemeier