

Pregnancy centers sue to block abortion information law

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Crisis pregnancy centers that discourage women from getting abortions are suing to block a new law that would make California the first state to require them to provide information about abortions.

A federal civil rights lawsuit against the California attorney general's office was filed Saturday in Sacramento on behalf of two of the nonprofit centers, the Sacramento Bee reported. Both facilities are affiliated with churches.

The lawsuit contends the bill signed last week by Gov. Jerry Brown violates the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and religion. It seeks a court injunction to stop the measure from taking effect in January.

The law is the first to impose statewide information requirements on crisis pregnancy centers, which often are run by religiously affiliated groups that discourage women from getting abortions. The measure requires the centers to notify patients that California has programs to help them access affordable family planning, abortion services and [prenatal care](#).

State Attorney General Kamala D. Harris backed the law, and her office has authority to enforce it.

"We will vigorously defend the state law in court," Harris spokeswoman Kristin Ford said in a statement.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of A Woman's Friend Pregnancy Resource Clinic in Marysville and Crisis Pregnancy Center of Northern California in Redding. Both facilities offer free pregnancy testing and consultations. They do not offer or refer for abortions.

The new law unconstitutionally forces the clinics "to speak messages that they have not chosen, with which they do not agree, and that distract and detract from the messages they have chosen to speak," according to the complaint.

The lawsuit also claims improper interference with freedom of religion because the "mandated state message ... is inconsistent with plaintiffs' religious convictions," the suit contends.

Backers of the [law](#) argued it was crafted to address concerns raised by courts elsewhere, which have blocked some local attempts to require centers to disclose information about whether they provide referrals for abortion, emergency contraception or prenatal care.

The abortion-rights group NARAL Pro-Choice California estimates there are more than 4,000 pregnancy crisis centers, or pregnancy help centers, operating in the U.S. Critics contend they exist mainly to coerce women into continuing their pregnancies.

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