

Newspapers challenge anonymity in vaccine mandate lawsuit

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A group of newspapers has intervened in a lawsuit over vaccine mandates with a goal of challenging the plaintiffs' anonymity.

The unnamed health care workers sued in [federal court](#) last summer, contending the mandate violated their religious freedoms. The workers are identified in the lawsuit as "Jane Does 1-6" and "John Does 1-3."

But a judge [Thursday granted a motion](#) allowing the newspapers—the Portland Press Herald, Maine Sunday Telegram, Kennebec Journal, Morning Sentinel and Sun Journal—to challenge the plaintiffs' anonymity.

"This is a matter of intense public interest, and the public has the right to know who is challenging the state's handling of a public health crisis," said Steve Greenlee, executive editor of the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram. "Our system of justice was designed to be open and transparent, and there's no compelling reason for anonymity in this case."

Maine's vaccine mandate for [health care workers](#) was upheld by a [federal judge](#) in Maine and by the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to intervene to stop the law from going into effect but is still considering whether to hear arguments on the underlying case.

The state began enforcing the mandate Oct. 29.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs argued against revealing their identities. "Shielding plaintiffs' identities from the public is necessary to protect their safety and the personal nature of their medical and religious decisions," their attorneys wrote in a motion.

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