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13 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

14 COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA, TRUST
15 WOMEN SEATTLE, LOS ANGELES LGBT
16 CENTER, WHITMAN-WALKER CLINIC,
17 INC. d/b/a WHITMAN-WALKER HEALTH,
18 BRADBURY-SULLIVAN LGBT
19 COMMUNITY CENTER, CENTER ON
20 HALSTED, HARTFORD GYN CENTER,
21 MAZZONI CENTER, MEDICAL STUDENTS
22 FOR CHOICE, AGLP: THE ASSOCIATION
23 OF LGBTQ+ PSYCHIATRISTS, AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS d/b/a GLMA: HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS ADVANCING LGBTQ
EQUALITY, COLLEEN MCNICHOLAS,
ROBERT BOLAN, WARD CARPENTER,
SARAH HENN, and RANDY PUMPHREY,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

25 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
26 HUMAN SERVICES and ALEX M. AZAR, II,
27 in his official capacity as SECRETARY OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,

Defendants.

Case No. 5:19-cv-2916

**DECLARATION OF NASEEMA SHAFI,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
WHITMAN-WALKER HEALTH IN
SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION
FOR PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

1 I, Naseema Shafi, declare as follows:

2 1. I am Chief Executive Officer of Whitman-Walker Clinic, Inc., d/b/a Whitman-Walker
3 Health (Whitman-Walker). I received a J.D. degree from the University of Maryland School of
4 Law in 2005. I have served at Whitman-Walker for more than twelve years, first as a Compliance
5 Analyst and Director of Compliance; then Chief Operating Officer, and subsequently Deputy
6 Executive Director. I assumed the CEO position in January 2019. I am submitting this Declaration
7 in support of Plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction to prevent the Denial-of-Care Rule
8 from taking effect.

9 2. Whitman-Walker was founded in 1973, and legally incorporated in 1978 to respond to
10 the healthcare needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Our team
11 provides a range of services, including medical and community care, transgender care and services,
12 behavioral-health services, dental services, legal services, insurance-navigation services, and youth
13 and family support in Washington, DC. The mission of Whitman-Walker is to offer affirming
14 community-based health and wellness services to all with a special expertise in LGBT and HIV
15 care. We empower all persons to live healthy, love openly, and achieve equality and inclusion. In
16 2018, Whitman-Walker provided healthcare services to more than 20,700 individuals.

17 3. Whitman-Walker's patient population is quite diverse and reflects Whitman-Walker's
18 commitment to being a healthcare home for individuals and families that have experienced stigma
19 and discrimination, or have otherwise encountered challenges in obtaining affordable, high-quality
20 healthcare. In calendar year 2018, 58% percent of our healthcare patients and clients who provided
21 their sexual orientation identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or otherwise non-heterosexual, and 9%
22 of our patients and clients—more than 1,800 individuals—identified as transgender or gender
23 nonconforming.

24 4. We at Whitman-Walker also employ dynamic and diverse employees who reflect the
25 diversity of the populations we serve. At the present, we employ 284 medical and behavioral-
26 health providers and support staff, medical-adherence and insurance-navigation professionals,
27 community health-workers, lawyers and paralegals, researchers, administrators, and professionals
28 working in finance, development, human resources, and external affairs. We have employees of

1 many races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religious and spiritual traditions, and life
2 experiences. What unites us all is our shared commitment to creating and sustaining a welcoming,
3 inclusive healthcare home for everyone who seeks our care.

4 5. The Denial-of-Care Rule empowers religiously motivated discriminatory behavior by
5 healthcare providers that would be corrosive of fundamental professional standards, threaten
6 Whitman-Walker's patients' welfare, and place significant strain on our ability to fulfill our critical
7 mission. The Denial-of-Care Rule's message that healthcare providers could be legally entitled to
8 refuse or restrict care, based on their personal religious or moral beliefs, flies in the face of the
9 standards and ethics of every healthcare profession, and would sow confusion and undermine the
10 entire healthcare system. Healthcare is a fundamentally patient-oriented endeavor and the Denial-
11 of-Care Rule's sweeping right to avoid "complicity," with complete disregard for the harm that
12 might result to others, is legally, morally, and medically unsupportable, and is fundamentally
13 corrosive to healthcare providers like Whitman-Walker.

14 6. As written, provisions in the Rule that empower healthcare personnel to refuse to
15 provide care based on their personal beliefs apply to entities that receive any grant, contract, loan,
16 or loan guarantee under the Public Health Service Act (PHSA); any Health and Human Services-
17 administered grant or contract for biomedical or behavioral research; or funds for any health service
18 program or research activity under any HHS-administered program. Section 88.3(a)(1). "Health
19 service program" is defined so broadly that it seems to cover any health or wellness services or
20 other activities. Section 88.2. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, Whitman-Walker receives
21 grants and other financial support under the PHSA. We receive substantial funding under the Ryan
22 White Care Act, which is administered by HHS. The majority of our third-party revenues for
23 medical and behavioral-health services are reimbursed through Medicaid and Medicare, which are
24 HHS-administered programs. As Dr. Henn, our Chief Health Officer, discusses in her Declaration,
25 Whitman-Walker receives major funding for biomedical and behavioral research from HHS
26 entities.

27 7. We are particularly concerned that the Denial-of-Care Rule is written so broadly that it
28 would empower healthcare personnel to deny care based on personal objections to LGBT people.

1 HHS expressly leaves open the possibility that LGBT care might be denied, and that it might
2 interpret the legal right to refuse to assist in “sterilization” procedures to include care for
3 transgender patients.

4 8. The impact on Whitman-Walker and its patients of a broad, legally unsupported
5 expansion of healthcare providers’ refusal rights would be particularly drastic. Providing
6 welcoming, high-quality care to the LGBT community and people living with HIV is at the core of
7 Whitman-Walker’s mission. These are communities that are in particular need of affirming,
8 culturally competent care because of the widespread stigma and discrimination they have
9 experienced and continue to experience. By encouraging employees of hospitals, health systems,
10 clinics, nursing homes, and physician offices to express and act on their individual beliefs, rather
11 than focusing on patients’ specific healthcare needs, the Rule invites chaos to the overall healthcare
12 system and undercuts Whitman-Walker’s operations. Specifically, the Rule would create real harm
13 to the sustainability of Whitman-Walker by consuming precious resources with unnecessary work-
14 arounds and potential litigation; and increasing uncompensated patient care volume. This rule may
15 also raise the specter of misalignment within our work-force if we have staff whose religious beliefs
16 may cause them to wish to deny care themselves. Whitman-Walker’s very mission would be at
17 risk of being frustrated in such an environment.

18 9. Whitman-Walker strives to ensure that all staff understand that one’s personal, religious,
19 and moral views are irrelevant to Whitman-Walker’s patients’ needs and mission. It would be very
20 difficult, if not impossible, for Whitman-Walker to accommodate individual healthcare staff who
21 might object to providing basic aspects of Whitman-Walker’s services—for example, providing
22 treatment for gender dysphoria, counseling pregnant clients on their pregnancy termination options,
23 HIV-prevention-related counseling, harm-reduction care for substance users, or healthcare services
24 to lesbian, gay, or bisexual patients—without fundamentally compromising its mission and the
25 quality of patient care.

26 10. The Denial-of-Care Rule announces a very broad definition of a healthcare worker’s
27 alleged right to refuse to “assist in the performance” of care to which they object for personal
28 reasons. HHS’ definition is so broad that it seems to encompass providing referrals and information

1 to patients and any assistance receiving care to which the employee objects, at Whitman-Walker or
2 any place else. This could affect not only our physicians, physician assistants, nurses and nurse
3 practitioners, and therapists, but medical assistants, persons conducting HIV and Sexually
4 Transmitted Infection testing and counseling, front-desk staff, and persons who provide scheduling
5 services and information over the phone. Many of Whitman-Walker's LGBT patients and patients
6 living with HIV have experienced substantial stigma and discrimination and are appropriately
7 concerned with being welcomed or not welcomed in a healthcare setting. If they encounter
8 discrimination at Whitman-Walker from any staff person at any point, Whitman-Walker's
9 reputation as a safe and welcoming place would be undermined. There are multiple "patient
10 touches" in Whitman-Walker's system as in any healthcare system: from the staff person
11 answering the phone or sitting at the front desk to the physician to the pharmacy worker. Because
12 each of these interactions with Whitman-Walker staff can convey respect and affirmation or
13 disrespect and rejection, they have a direct impact on patients' engagement in their own healthcare
14 and can thus, depending on their nature, either promote or undermine patient health.

15 11. Consistent with its commitment to welcoming and nondiscriminatory healthcare,
16 Whitman-Walker's growing work force is very diverse. Encouraging individual employees to think
17 that their discriminatory beliefs can prevail over their duties to patients—and to their fellow
18 employees—would introduce confusion and discord into Whitman-Walker's staff as well as pose
19 barriers to patient care. We have had situations in which an employee has expressed personal
20 religious or moral discomfort or disagreement with homosexuality or bisexuality; or with healthcare
21 intended to help a transgender person transition from the sex they were assigned at birth to their
22 own gender identity; or with a patient's drug use or sexual behavior. In such situations, we
23 emphasize to the employee that patient needs, and maintaining a respectful and welcoming
24 environment for every patient, are paramount and must prevail over personal beliefs of staff. If
25 individual employees felt legally empowered to refuse to provide care, and Whitman-Walker were
26 limited in how it could respond to such situations, the harm to our mission could be devastating.

27 12. The harm to Whitman-Walker's operations, finances, and employee morale would be
28 particularly complicated because Whitman-Walker, like many healthcare entities, has a quasi-

1 unionized workforce. Attempts to accommodate, for instance, one employee's unwillingness to
2 work with LGBT patients or women seeking reproductive healthcare would impose burdens on and
3 increase workloads for other staff, and likely would result in grievances filed by other employees
4 affected by the conscience accommodations. This is especially true where the Denial-of-Care Rule
5 limits Whitman-Walker's options for maintaining policies and procedures for requesting religious
6 or moral-based accommodations in advance to ensure that Whitman-Walker has sufficient staff
7 available to meet patients' needs. Whitman-Walker would incur substantial financial costs and
8 drains on staff time that would substantially challenge its ability to care for a growing patient load.
9 Whitman-Walker, for example, would have to hire additional human resources staff to address the
10 increase in accommodation requests as well as grievances related to hostile work environments
11 resulting from religious-based objections to performing core job responsibilities and increased
12 workloads for other staff.

13 13. There would also be increased difficulty in determining whether job applicants will be
14 unwilling to perform essential job functions, which seems likely to undermine Whitman-Walker's
15 philosophy of fostering a diverse workforce. Whitman-Walker's current recruiting process is
16 developed to ascertain whether a job applicant would provide healthcare consistent with Whitman-
17 Walker's mission to establish a welcoming, nondiscriminatory environment for all patients and
18 staff, without violating the law. Whitman-Walker emphasizes these principles of inclusion with
19 language that reflects diversity principles in our job descriptions. If an applicant appears to draw
20 lines based on religious or moral principles that are inconsistent with Whitman-Walker's mission,
21 hiring managers will be in a complex position of trying to ascertain whether such applicants could
22 end up causing harm to patients given the Denial-of-Care Rule's prohibition on inquiring about
23 these issues directly. Moreover, adherence to our mission is emphasized in our new employee
24 orientation process, and all employees are currently required to sign a statement committing to our
25 values of inclusiveness, non-judgment, and fully caring for every patient and for fellow staff.
26 Providing care in a non-discriminatory manner, putting aside people's individual religious beliefs,
27 is a core part of Whitman-Walker's job criteria for new applicants. Changing those criteria thwarts
28 Whitman-Walker's mission.

1 14. The Rule’s provisions regarding the accommodation of staff with personal “conscience”
2 objections to any portion of our mission, our services, or our patients, would cause major damage
3 to our operations and patients. My understanding is that the Rule would frustrate the important
4 process that many mission-based organizations like Whitman-Walker have: an assessment of
5 employees’ alignment with their mission. The Rule provides that, after hiring, we could ask staff
6 to inform us of their objections, but the objecting staff must consent to our accommodation offers
7 and may unilaterally reject any proffered accommodations. These provisions appear to impose
8 one-sided obligations on the employer that are unworkable for a healthcare center: there does not
9 appear to be any requirement that the objecting employee be reasonable or willing to compromise,
10 and the Rule expressly declares that the employer cannot object to an accommodation that would
11 impose an undue hardship on the employer or that would compromise patient care. Furthermore,
12 the Rule does not provide for any emergency exception to ensure that all patients receive
13 immediate, life-saving care, regardless of staff members’ religious beliefs.

14 15. More specifically, the accommodation provisions are not feasible for Whitman-Walker
15 for a number of reasons. First, requiring us to devote our limited financial resources to hiring
16 additional staff, in order to ensure that patient care does not suffer from accommodating some
17 staff’s personal objections, would almost inevitably force us to reduce our existing services.
18 Second, the Rule states that an accommodation cannot “exclude [a] protected [person] from fields
19 of practice on the basis of their protected objections.” Section 88.2 (definition of “Discriminate or
20 Discrimination”). Given Whitman-Walker’s commitment to providing affirming healthcare to all,
21 a healthcare provider or any other employee with objections to, for instance, LGBT patients, could
22 not be maintained in any patient-facing role, which likely would “exclude” them from a “field of
23 practice.” Subjecting any of our patients to the risk of interactions with any Whitman-Walker staff
24 member who expresses opposition or hostility to them or their course of treatment would result in
25 irreversible damage to our reputation and would likely be harmful to the patient’s well-being.
26 Third, the rule provides that staff can be asked to specify their objections only once per year “unless
27 supported by a persuasive justification.” As a result, Whitman-Walker could be faced with
28 unexpected objections in the intervening twelve months, based on newly emergent patient needs,

1 otherwise unanticipated situations, or an employee’s evolving religious beliefs. The inability to
2 know of objections in advance will interfere with Whitman-Walker’s provision of services to its
3 patients, either by forcing Whitman-Walker to divert resources to redundant staffing or by leaving
4 it without an employee willing to deliver appropriate care. Fourth, any healthcare professional or
5 other staff person may be needed to respond to an emergency situation beyond the scope of their
6 regular duties—for instance, responding to a patient who is overdosing, or who is in acute distress
7 or in a crisis situation that may challenge the staff person’s personal comfort level. In addition, as
8 I have already noted, efforts to accommodate an individual provider’s or other staff person’s
9 personal objections to particular patients, procedures or job-related activities will inevitably
10 decrease staff morale, increase conflict between staff members, and likely lead to grievance
11 procedures in our quasi-unionized workplaces.

12 16. HHS has also defined the “workforce” covered by the Rule to include not only
13 employees, but also contractors, trainers, and even volunteers. This interpretation is even more
14 disruptive of our operations and patient services. For many years, Whitman-Walker has offered
15 walk-in sexually-transmitted-infection testing, treatment and counseling, in a program that is
16 largely staffed by volunteer healthcare professionals. In 2018, that program served more than 1,700
17 individuals. We also rely extensively on trained volunteers for our HIV testing and counseling
18 services, our peer support counseling services, and our Legal Services Department. Many of the
19 thousands of patients and clients receiving these services every year are in very vulnerable
20 situations, and the possibility that our staff would have limited control over how these volunteers
21 chose to deliver services, and how they might interact with patients and clients, threatens critical
22 components of our mission.

23 17. Whatever its effect on Whitman-Walker ability to provide affirming, non-
24 discriminatory care to all of our own patients, it is quite likely that the Denial-of-Care Rule will
25 result in a substantial increase in discrimination against LGBT individuals by healthcare providers
26 and institutions outside of Whitman-Walker. Dr. Henn’s and Dr. Pumphrey’s declarations describe
27 a number of incidents of discrimination that our patients have encountered in other healthcare
28 facilities and offices that our patients have reported to our medical and behavioral health providers.

1 In addition, the lawyers in our Legal Services Department learn of similar incidents from their
2 clients.

3 18. Since the mid-1980s, Whitman-Walker has had an in-house Legal Services Department.
4 Our attorneys and legal assistants provide information, counseling, and representation to Whitman-
5 Walker patients, and to others in the community who are LGBT or living with HIV, on a wide
6 range of civil legal matters that relate directly or indirectly to health and wellness – including access
7 to healthcare and discrimination based on HIV, sexual orientation, or gender identity. They also
8 oversee legal clinics, staffed largely by volunteer attorneys, which assist transgender and gender-
9 nonconforming individuals to change their legal names and to correct their birth certificates,
10 driver’s licenses, passports, Social Security records, and other identity documents to reflect their
11 new names and actual gender identities. Over the years, Whitman-Walker Legal Services staff and
12 volunteer attorneys have encountered many instances of discrimination by healthcare providers and
13 their staff based on the sexual orientation or gender identity of patients. Recent examples include:

- 14 a. As recounted in Dr. Henn’s Declaration, Whitman-Walker transgender
15 patients seeking gender transition-related surgery have been rejected at local
16 hospitals, even for procedures that are often performed on non-transgender
17 patients (such as breast surgery), and even though the patients had health
18 insurance or were otherwise able to pay for the procedures.
- 19 b. A transgender woman who was about to have surgery at a Washington, DC
20 hospital for an inner ear condition (unrelated in any way to her transgender-
21 related healthcare) was confronted and harassed by hospital staff objecting
22 to her gender identity. She was repeatedly and intentionally referred to as
23 “he” and as “a man” by staff in the radiology department when she went for
24 a pre-surgical scan; by desk staff at the surgery center; and by the nurse
25 preparing her for surgery. Several nurses talked about her with each other
26 and laughed. One staff person refused to talk with the patient when she
27 addressed them. Even the anesthesiologist who she was expected to entrust
28 with her life in one of her most vulnerable moments before surgery, mocked

1 her and intentionally referred to her as a man. Healthcare providers are
2 supposed to provide comfort to patients when they seek healthcare. Instead,
3 the staff increased her fear just before her surgery because they showed
4 complete disrespect and lack of care for the patient's health and well-being.

5 c. Another transgender woman went to the office of an ophthalmologist at the
6 same medical center for an eye exam. She arrived on time, filled out the
7 initial paperwork, and then waited for about 45 minutes without being called
8 for her appointment. The patient went to the desk to inquire, and was treated
9 rudely by the staff. The staff then arbitrarily called a security guard to eject
10 her from the office. As the patient spoke to the security guard, one of the
11 clinic staff came to her and said, loudly and offensively, "Sir, your kind
12 needs to go away. We're not serving your kind." She complained to the
13 Office of the Chief Medical Officer and was eventually seen by the
14 ophthalmologist on another day, after considerable effort by her and
15 Whitman-Walker staff.

16 d. A transgender woman was seen by a medical provider at Whitman-Walker,
17 who examined her and determined she might have broken her ankle. She
18 was sent to the Emergency Room at a Washington, DC hospital. She
19 identified herself to the ER check-in staff as a woman and presented a
20 driver's license that contained a female gender marker. She then waited for
21 a number of hours (she remembers five or six) without being examined.
22 When she inquired about the delay, she was treated rudely and mis-gendered
23 by ER staff. She was finally called from the waiting area, but was taken to
24 the men's dressing room, rather than the area for women patients, to undress
25 and put on a gown for a scan. During the four or more hours before she
26 received the scan, examination and treatment, she suffered very significant
27 physical pain.
28

1 e. Another LGBT patient with end-stage renal disease, was confronted by a
2 staff person at the dialysis clinic the patient attends regularly for care. The
3 employee expressed a strong dislike for LGBT people and objected to being
4 involved in the patient's care at the clinic.

5 19. The Denial-of-Care Rule will invite an increase in discriminatory experiences for LGBT
6 patients seeking healthcare services, resulting in harm to the patients and community that Whitman-
7 Walker serves.

8 20. Escalating healthcare discrimination and fear of such discrimination, resulting from the
9 Denial-of-Care Rule, is also likely to result in increased demand for Whitman-Walker's healthcare
10 services, which will present considerable operational and financial challenges. Many of Whitman-
11 Walker's healthcare services lose money due to low third-party reimbursement rates and indirect
12 cost reimbursement rates in contracts and grants which are substantially less than Whitman-
13 Walker's cost of service. Increased demand for Whitman-Walker's healthcare services, driven by
14 increased discrimination and fear of discrimination outside of Whitman-Walker, would exacerbate
15 that pressure. We likely will be called upon to see more patients, and that patient care does not
16 financially cover itself. As a result, Whitman-Walker may not be able to meet the increased demand
17 and sustain the additional financial burdens resulting from an increased load of patients who either
18 fear discrimination elsewhere or who were discriminated against or denied services at other
19 institutions.

20 21. At the same time, given Whitman-Walker's mission to provide healthcare to
21 marginalized communities, including the LGBT community and people living with HIV, Whitman-
22 Walker needs to increase its education programs and community outreach to help those affected by
23 the Denial-of-Care Rule find the healthcare services that they need and assist them with their trauma
24 resulting from the Rule. Whitman-Walker needs to continue informing the community about its
25 commitment to serving all patients in a non-discriminatory and welcoming manner and notify its
26 patients that the Denial-of-Care Rule will not change Whitman-Walker's commitment to providing
27 exceptional healthcare services to all members of the community. Whitman-Walker will continue
28 fighting for its patients' rights, including, for example, advocating on behalf of transgender patients

1 who seek treatment for gender dysphoria, but who are rejected due to providers' religious or moral
2 objections to treating such patients. As a result of the Denial-of-Care Rule, Whitman-Walker will
3 also need to devote more resources to working with outside providers and organizations to remind
4 them of the importance of providing healthcare to all patients on non-discriminatory terms.

5 22. The Denial-of-Care Rule also adversely impacts Whitman-Walker by necessitating a
6 diversion and reallocation of resources in order to provide referrals to patients that it does not have
7 the resources to treat either because Whitman-Walker has reached its capacity for new patients
8 (especially in the behavioral-health departments) or because the patient requires treatment in a
9 specialty that Whitman-Walker does not have. These types of referrals are routine at Whitman-
10 Walker where its focus is on primary care and HIV-specialty care. The Denial-of-Care Rule will
11 make it significantly more difficult and resource-intensive for us to locate, monitor, and provide
12 appropriate referrals. With an increase in referral requests as a result of the Denial-of-Care Rule,
13 Whitman-Walker will need to allocate additional staff time to pre-screen service referrals to ensure
14 that staff are sending patients to LGBT-affirming providers and not to providers who themselves
15 or whose staff would cause additional harm to Whitman-Walker patients.

16 23. As I previously noted, Whitman-Walker receives various forms of federal funding for
17 health and wellness-related services and for biomedical and behavioral research from HHS and
18 from institutions affiliated with or themselves funded by HHS, including but not limited to funds
19 under the PHSA, direct grants, Medicaid and Medicare programs administered by the Centers for
20 Medicare and Medicaid Services, the FQHC and Ryan White funding administered by the Health
21 Resources and Services Administration; funds under the 340b drug subsidy program, research
22 grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health,
23 and Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements. The financial risk associated with these funds and
24 related benefits accounts for tens of millions of dollars in revenue for the health center. Whitman-
25 Walker, therefore, has a reasonable fear that it could be sanctioned and lose many millions of dollars
26 of federal funding as a result of our nondiscrimination policies and other practices designed to
27 ensure the highest quality patient care and compliance with applicable medical guidelines,
28 standards of care, and ethical requirements. If Whitman-Walker were to be sanctioned and lose

1 federal funding as a result of the Rule's enforcement, the impact would include massive service
2 reduction if not closure.

3 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the
4 foregoing is true and correct.

5 Dated: June 5, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

6  _____

7 Naseema Shafi
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