



For Immediate Release

Contact: Julie Wilensky, Amicus Committee Chair, amicus@balif.org

Coalition of National LGBT, Racial Equality, and Health Groups File Amicus Brief in U.S. Supreme Court Challenge to Texas Abortion Restrictions

Coalition Urges Court to Carefully Scrutinize State's Unfounded Health and Safety Claims

(Washington, D.C., January 5, 2016)— Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom (BALIF) and a coalition of 13 other LGBT, racial justice, and health equity organizations have filed an amicus brief in *Whole Woman's Health v. Cole* asking the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down draconian restrictions on abortion providers enacted by the State of Texas in 2013 which, if upheld, would lead to the closing of most abortion clinics in the state. The brief urges the Court to carefully scrutinize the state's asserted justification for the law, just as the Court has done with other laws that infringe upon fundamental freedoms. The State of Texas has argued that the law protects the health of women seeking abortion, but the evidence at trial showed just the opposite. In fact, medical organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, and the American Public Health Association have explained that the restrictions imposed by the new law are medically unnecessary and endanger, rather than advance, women's health.

In addition to BALIF, the organizations filing the brief are the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, the Equal Justice Society, the National Black Justice Coalition, the Family Equality Council, the Human Rights Campaign, the National LGBTQ Task Force, GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality, Equality Federation, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, Immigration Equality, the National Health Law Program, and Movement Advancement Project.

U.S. history is replete with attempts to use pseudo-science and unsupported health-related justifications to exclude individuals and groups from the full protection of essential constitutional liberties, including laws barring interracial marriage, excluding women from certain professions, permitting the forced sterilization of those deemed "inferior," and criminalizing and discriminating against LGBT people. BALIF and its fellow amici urge the Court to remember this history and to fulfill its constitutional obligation to look carefully at the State's asserted justifications for restricting women's fundamental right to reproductive autonomy.

"The brief powerfully reminds us of the history of using empirically indefensible social science to justify discrimination against vulnerable groups," said Julie Wilensky, chair of BALIF's Amicus Committee. "With this history in mind, it is especially important for the Court to meaningfully review the public health rationales Texas has asserted here."

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BALIF is the nation's oldest and largest bar association of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in the field of law. Founded in 1980, BALIF represents its members' interests in the wider San Francisco Bay Area. BALIF members and supporters include San Francisco Bay Area judges, lawyers, law students, and legal workers.