

# More than 180 Minnesota health care workers sue over vaccine mandate

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More than 180 health care workers spanning hospital systems across Minnesota are asking for an injunction to stop their employers from mandating they be vaccinated from COVID-19, saying the directive violates religious freedoms and other state and federal laws.

A lawsuit filed Monday in U.S. District Court includes unnamed plaintiffs from hospitals and clinics across Minnesota, and identifies nearly two dozen health care institutions as defendants, along with Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Rochelle Walensky and other federal health officials. Those being sued include some of the state's top health care facilities, such as Mayo Clinic, Fairview Health Services, University of Minnesota Physicians and Regions Hospital.

The lawsuit comes weeks after President Joe Biden announced new federal mandates for vaccinations, which includes health care workers at facilities that receive Medicare or Medicaid and those who work at businesses

with 100 or more employees. Hospital officials in Minnesota largely welcomed Biden's announcement, calling it key to curbing preventable deaths and illnesses filling up their facilities. "The vast majority of COVID patients hospitalized in the M Health Fairview system are unvaccinated," [Fairview said in a statement](#) after Biden's announcement. Hospital officials said at the time about 80% of staff had already been vaccinated.

The lawsuit claims that employer mandates are forcing workers, including religious objectors and people who've recovered from the virus, to be vaccinated so that health care institutions can boost their vaccination numbers and get more money in federal subsidies.

"Plaintiffs' employers are placing a substantial burden on their employees not to practice their-religious-based objection to the COVID-19 vaccination, or live under the threat of having their religious exemption withdrawn at any time," the lawsuit states.

Gregory Erickson, one of the attorneys representing the health care workers, said his clients include people with religious concerns, pregnant women and young people who are healthy and believe "it's a coin flip whether they're in worse shape with COVID or the vaccine."

Erickson said he hopes the injunction is granted quickly,

citing vaccine mandate deadlines quickly approaching. He said health care workers can lose their jobs if not vaccinated, which he predicts will worsen the "critical shortage of nurses in this country right now."

"If people thought health care was being delayed from COVID, that's like a soft summer rain compared to what's going to happen when you fire all these people," he said.

The lawsuit says the physicians, nurses, technologists and pharmacists behind the lawsuit filed the civil action under pseudonyms because of "pressure on getting vaccinated." "The same 'front line' health care workers hailed as heroes by the media for treating Covid patients before vaccines were available, and even for months after the vaccines became available, including the Plaintiff employees herein, are now vilified by the same media as pariahs who must be set apart from society until they are shamed, threatened, or now mandated into vaccinating," the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit is one of many being filed across the country challenging vaccine mandates. This week, a [federal appeals panel in New York](#) ruled that the nation's largest school district can impose a vaccine mandate on its teachers and other workers. Meanwhile, hospitals and nursing homes around the United States [say they are preparing for staff shortages](#) as deadlines are arriving for health care workers to get vaccinated.

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