

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Service and Advocacy Groups Sue Trump Admin for Scrapping Requirements That Protected Social Service Recipients' Religious Freedom and Access to Services

For more on the lawsuit, click [here](#).

The coalition issued the following statements upon filing:

“As Jews and as Americans, we are deeply offended and disturbed that the Trump administration promulgated a rule that as a practical matter forces Jews and other religious minorities to give up their freedom to worship as they choose in order to get food. The Trump administration has essentially licensed religious discrimination against some of our nation’s most vulnerable people. Even on the last day of this tumultuous presidency, we will not allow this to happen. Now, more than ever before, the millions of Americans facing hunger in the wake of COVID-19 must not be forced to withstand one more barrier to seeking the assistance they need to feed themselves and their families.”

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Abby J. Leibman, President & CEO

“The Trump administration’s perversion of religious freedom has continued till, literally, its last day. We’re determined to ensure that individuals not believing in the majority creed know their rights and are empowered to protect themselves against discrimination and marginalization while receiving vital social services.”

Freedom From Religion Foundation
Annie Laurie Gaylor, Co-President

“Religious groups paid by the federal government to provide services *must* provide them with no strings attached—not hold them out as a carrot for participating in religious worship. This is an attack on the religious freedom of millions of people in need, and particularly on the third of Americans who do not identify with a religion. No one should be subjected to religious coercion to receive federal benefits. This challenge will empower recipients of benefits to protect their own religious freedom.”

American Atheists
Nick Fish, President

“We refuse to allow the Trump administration to make it any easier to discriminate against LGBT elders as they head out the door. Many of our community’s elders rely on federally funded providers for essential services – SAGE is joining this lawsuit to ensure that they’re not victimized in the process.”

SAGE
Michael Adams, CEO

“The Trump administration failed to follow the law and provide a sufficient legal justification for its rollback of these important requirements, which protected vulnerable populations’ religious freedom and access to taxpayer-funded social services. On its final full day in power, the Trump administration has once again put its harmful agenda ahead of the law and those most in need of help.”

Democracy Forward
Robin Thurston, Managing Senior Counsel

“When providing social services, our federal government’s top priority should be to ensure that vulnerable people get the help they need without sacrificing their religious freedom or civil rights. The Trump administration’s unlawful rules do the opposite – they strip critical protections from people who rely on social services and force people to choose between obtaining services they desperately need and remaining true to their personal religious beliefs and identities. Religious freedom should never be misused to permit discrimination or create barriers for people seeking taxpayer-funded services. We urge the court to invalidate these rules, and the Biden-Harris administration to promptly revoke them.”

Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Rachel Laser, President and CEO

“It’s outrageous and alarming that the Trump administration, on its way out of town and in the midst of a raging pandemic, cannot resist one last shot at key nondiscrimination protections across no less than nine federal agencies that serve people in crisis. This last gasp effort yet again privileges religion and religious institutions over the needs of LGBTQ people, seniors, youth who are survivors of trafficking, survivors of interpersonal violence, and other vulnerable populations that our publicly funded programs are intended to serve, and who need these services to survive and thrive. This shameful Trump administration rule change will severely impair the ability of these community members to know their rights and obtain sometimes life-saving services.

This is the 46th lawsuit we have had to file against the Trump administration to block its obsessive, lawless efforts to create ever-greater free passes for religious entities and to target refugees, communities of color, women, and LGBTQ people.”

Lambda Legal
Jennifer Pizer, Law and Policy Director

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Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, **MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger** is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

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The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a Madison, Wis.-based national organization dedicated to the separation of state and church, with 33,000 nonreligious members and several chapters all around the country.

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American Atheists is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that defends the rights of atheists, freethinkers, and other nonbelievers; advocates for the absolute separation of religion and government; and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy. American Atheists was founded in 1963 by Madalyn Murray O’Hair.

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The **Hindu American Foundation** (HAF) is an educational and advocacy organization established in 2003. HAF focuses on educating the public about Hindus and Hinduism and advocating for policies and practices that ensure the well-being of all people and the planet. HAF works directly with educators and journalists to ensure accurate understanding of Hindus and Hinduism. HAF also works with policymakers and key stakeholders to champion issues of concern to Hindu Americans, including defending civil and human rights and protecting all living beings.

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SAGE is the country's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older people. Founded in 1978 and headquartered in New York City, SAGE is a national organization that offers supportive services and consumer resources to LGBT older people and their caregivers. SAGE also

advocates for public policy changes that address the needs of LGBT elders, provides education and technical assistance for aging providers and LGBT community organizations through its National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, and cultural competency training through SAGECare. With staff located across the country, SAGE also coordinates SAGENet, a growing network of affiliates in the United States.

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The **New York City Anti-Violence Project** (AVP) empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV-affected communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education, and supports survivors through counseling and advocacy.

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Ark of Freedom Alliance is a public health organization that prevents violence and the trafficking of historically un- and under-identified opportunity youth, in particular black, Latinx, Native American/Indigenous and LGBTQ+ opportunity youth through advocacy and survivor care.

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Democracy Forward is a nonprofit legal organization that scrutinizes Executive Branch activity across policy areas, represents clients in litigation to challenge unlawful actions, and educates the public when the White House or federal agencies break the law.

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Americans United for Separation of Church and State is a religious freedom advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947, AU educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.

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Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and everyone living with HIV through impact litigation, education, and public policy work.

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