

## New Jersey nurses face job loss for refusing to assist abortions



Trenton, N.J., Nov 2, 2011 / 06:03 am (CNA).- Twelve nurses in New Jersey have filed a lawsuit against a local government hospital for being told they would lose their jobs if they refuse to perform abortions.

The case shows evidence of “a systematic attack on the right of pro-life professionals to engage in their careers without being forced to violate their fundamental moral and religious beliefs,” Matt Bowman, attorney for the Alliance Defense Fund, told CNA.

On Oct. 31, the defense fund filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in New Jersey on behalf of the dozen nurses, who currently work at the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey.

According to Bowman, the hospital has violated federal and state law by requiring the nurses to perform abortions against their consciences and threatening to terminate their jobs if they refuse.

Two of the nurses—Lorna Mendoza and Julita Ching—are both scheduled to assist with an abortion this Friday, Nov. 4.

Bowman said that although the hospital has been performing abortions for many years, nurses had not been forced to assist until the hospital recently passed a policy and put one of the nurses who does abortions in a supervisory position.

Despite hospital officials initially agreeing to meet with the 12 nurses to discuss the issue, Bowman said, the meeting was canceled at the last minute when the nurses arrived with an attorney.

“We are asking the hospital to cease its illegal compulsion immediately,” he said, adding that the hospital is aware of the lawsuit.

“We’re going to ask the court to order the hospital to obey the law and to not violate our clients’

beliefs, and we're going to ask the court to make the hospital give back the millions of dollars that it's received in tax money on the promise that it would not force health care personnel to assist abortions.”

Bowman noted that the Alliance Defense Fund is seeing more and more cases of pro-life health care personnel being forced to assist in abortions and other practices that they object to on moral grounds.

“Even though we have federal and state laws in the books that protect them,” the hospital is “blatantly violating the law in an arrogant way,” he said.

The attorney said the situation is becoming more common in the U.S., with medical workers' conscience protections being increasingly disregarded.

“This case shows that there is a rampant crisis in which entities—that are getting tens and even hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government—are violating public trust by forcing health care personnel to participate in abortions against their religious beliefs. ”

By Marianne Medlin - CNA