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18 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
19 FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

20 EVAN MINTON.

21 Plaintiff.

22 v.

23 DIGNITY HEALTH; DIGNITY HEALTH
24 d/b/a MERCY SAN JUAN MEDICAL
CENTER,

25 Defendants.

Case No.

CGC 17-558259

26
27
28
VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR
DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF
AND STATUTORY DAMAGES

ENDORSED
FILED
Superior Court of California
County of San Francisco
APR 19 2017
CLERK OF THE COURT
BY: ROSSALY DELAVEGA
Deputy Clerk

INTRODUCTION

1
2 1. Plaintiff Evan Minton (“Plaintiff” or “Mr. Minton”) sought and was denied access to
3 medical services by Defendant Dignity Health, doing business as Mercy San Juan Medical Center
4 (“Defendant” or “MSJMC”), because he is transgender. MSJMC’s denial to Mr. Minton of medical
5 services that it regularly provides to non-transgender patients is sex discrimination and violates the
6 Unruh Civil Rights Act, Cal. Civ. Code § 51.

7 2. As part of the medical treatment stemming from his diagnosis of gender dysphoria,
8 Mr. Minton’s surgeon, Dr. Dawson, scheduled a hysterectomy for Mr. Minton at MSJMC on August 30,
9 2016. Dr. Dawson regularly performs hysterectomies at MSJMC, and in fact she had another
10 hysterectomy scheduled immediately following Mr. Minton’s scheduled procedure. In a conversation
11 two days before the scheduled procedure, however, Mr. Minton notified MSJMC personnel that he is
12 transgender. The next day, Dr. Dawson was informed that she would not be permitted to perform
13 Mr. Minton’s hysterectomy at MSJMC—either the following day or any day.

14 3. According to MSJMC personnel, Dr. Dawson was prevented from performing
15 Mr. Minton’s hysterectomy at MSJMC based on Mr. Minton’s diagnosis of gender dysphoria. Gender
16 dysphoria is a serious medical condition resulting from the feeling of incongruence between one’s
17 gender identity and one’s sex assigned at birth.

18 4. Because Defendant routinely allows Dr. Dawson and other physicians to perform
19 hysterectomies for patients on the bases of diagnoses other than gender dysphoria, Defendant’s refusal
20 to allow Dr. Dawson to perform Mr. Minton’s hysterectomy constitutes discrimination against
21 Mr. Minton because of his gender identity.

22 5. Defendant’s discrimination violates California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act, which broadly
23 prohibits business establishments from discriminating in the provision of goods and services to the
24 general public. The Unruh Act prohibits discrimination based on sex, which is explicitly defined to
25 include gender identity. Cal. Civ. Code § 51(b). Discriminating against Mr. Minton on the basis of his
26 gender dysphoria diagnosis therefore violates California law.

27 6. Mr. Minton seeks a declaratory judgment that Defendant violates California law by
28

1 prohibiting doctors from performing hysterectomies for patients with gender dysphoria while permitting
2 doctors to perform hysterectomies for patients without gender dysphoria. In addition, Mr. Minton seeks
3 an injunction requiring Defendant to allow doctors to perform the same procedures on patients with
4 gender dysphoria that they are permitted to perform on patients without gender dysphoria. Finally,
5 Mr. Minton seeks statutory damages under the Unruh Civil Rights Act, Cal. Civ. Code § 52(a).

6 JURISDICTION AND VENUE

7 7. This Court has jurisdiction under article VI, section 10, of the California Constitution and
8 California Code of Civil Procedure §§ 410.10, 525-26, 1060, and 1085.

9 8. Venue in this court is proper because this is an action against a nonprofit corporation,
10 Dignity Health, which has its the principal place of business in the City and County of San Francisco, at
11 185 Berry Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94107.¹ Civ. Code § 395.5.

12 THE PARTIES

13 Plaintiff Evan Minton

14 9. Plaintiff Evan Minton resides in Orangevale, California, a suburb of Sacramento.
15 Mr. Minton is a transgender man, which means that he was assigned the sex of female at birth, but his
16 gender identity is male and he identifies as a man.

17 Defendant Dignity Health

18 10. Dignity Health is registered as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit corporation. According
19 to its website, Dignity Health is the fifth-largest health system in the country, owning and operating a
20 large network of hospitals.² Also according to its website, Dignity Health is the largest hospital provider
21 in California, with 31 hospitals in the state.³ In 2012, Dignity Health's federal tax form 990 listed
22 revenue of \$8.7 billion and employment of 51,991 people. In Sacramento County, Dignity Health does
23

24 ¹ Dignity Health describes itself as "a California nonprofit public benefit corporation headquartered in
25 San Francisco," 2012 Form 990, Part III, Line 4a, and lists a San Francisco address for the company.
26 Dignity Health's most recent Statement of Information, filed with the California Secretary of State on
27 October 7, 2016, lists the corporation's "Principal Office Address" as 185 Berry Street, Suite 300, San
28 Francisco, CA 94017.

² <http://www.dignityhealth.org/cm/content/pages/about-us.asp>

³ *Id.*

1 business as Mercy San Juan Medical Center.

2 **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

3 **Gender Dysphoria Diagnosis and Treatment**

4 11. "Gender identity" is a well-established medical concept, referring to one's sense of
5 belonging to a particular gender. Typically, people who are designated female at birth based on their
6 external anatomy identify as girls or women, and people who are designated male at birth based on their
7 external anatomy identify as boys or men. For a transgender individual, however, gender identity differs
8 from the sex assigned to that person at birth. Transgender men typically are men who were assigned
9 "female" at birth, but have a male gender identity.

10 12. The medical diagnosis for the feeling of incongruence between one's gender identity and
11 one's sex assigned at birth, and the resulting distress caused by that incongruence, is "gender dysphoria"
12 (previously known as "gender identity disorder"). Gender dysphoria is a serious medical condition
13 codified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) and International
14 Classification of Diseases (ICD-10).⁴ The criteria for diagnosing gender dysphoria are set forth in the
15 DSM-V (302.85).

16 13. The widely accepted standards of care for treating gender dysphoria are published by the
17 World Professional Association for Transgender Health ("WPATH"). The WPATH Standards of Care
18 have been recognized as the authoritative standards of care by leading medical organizations, the U.S.
19 Department of Health and Human Services, and federal courts.

20 14. Under the WPATH standards, treatment for gender dysphoria may require medical steps
21 to affirm one's gender identity and help an individual transition from living as one gender to another.
22 This treatment, often referred to as transition-related care, may include hormone therapy, surgery
23 (sometimes called "sex reassignment surgery" or "gender affirming surgery"), and other medical

24 _____
25 ⁴ *Gender Dysphoria*, American Psychiatric Association (2013),
26 <http://www.dsm5.org/documents/gender%20dysphoria%20fact%20sheet.pdf> ("For a person to be
27 diagnosed with gender dysphoria, there must be a marked difference between the individual's
28 expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign him or her . . . Gender dysphoria is
manifested in a variety of ways, including strong desires to be treated as the other gender or to be rid of
one's sex characteristics, or a strong conviction that one has feelings and reactions typical of the other
gender.").

1 services that align individuals' bodies with their gender identities. The exact medical treatment varies
2 based on the individualized needs of the person.

3 15. Hysterectomy is surgery to remove a patient's uterus and is performed to treat a number
4 of health conditions, including uterine fibroids, endometriosis, pelvic support problems, abnormal
5 uterine bleeding, chronic pelvic pain, and gynecological cancer.⁵ A patient can no longer become
6 pregnant after undergoing a hysterectomy.⁶ Thus, hysterectomy is an inherently sterilizing procedure,
7 regardless of the reason for which it is performed. According to the U.S. Department of Health and
8 Human Services, hysterectomy is the second most common surgery, after a Cesarean section, among
9 women in the United States.⁷

10 16. Transgender men often decide to undergo hysterectomy as a gender-affirming surgical
11 treatment for gender dysphoria. The National Transgender Discrimination Survey in 2015, which
12 surveyed almost 28,000 transgender people, found that 14% of transgender men surveyed had
13 undergone a hysterectomy, and 57% wanted a hysterectomy someday.⁸ According to every major
14 medical organization and the overwhelming consensus among medical experts, treatments for gender
15 dysphoria, including surgical procedures such as hysterectomy, are effective and safe.

16 **Mr. Minton's Gender Dysphoria and Treatment**

17 17. Mr. Minton first began to identify as male and take social steps such as trying out
18 different male names and asking friends and family to call him by male pronouns in 2011. He was
19 subsequently diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Pursuant to this diagnosis and on the recommendation
20 of his treating physicians, Mr. Minton began to take additional steps to continue his transition shortly
21 after receiving the diagnosis. He began hormone replacement therapy in April of 2012 and had a

22 ⁵ *Hysterectomy*, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (March 2015),
23 <http://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Hysterectomy#what>.

24 ⁶ *Id.*

25 ⁷ *Hysterectomy*, Office on Women's Health, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services (2014),
26 <https://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/hysterectomy.html#n>.

27 ⁸ James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Ana, M. (2016). *The Report of the*
28 *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.
<http://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS%20Full%20Report%20-%20FINAL%201.6.17.pdf>

1 bilateral mastectomy in July of 2014. Mr. Minton legally changed his name by way of court order in
2 December 2014, and he legally changed the gender shown on his driver's license in 2015.

3 18. By August 2016, Mr. Minton and his treating physicians had a plan for a series of
4 medical procedures that would result in a phalloplasty, or the surgical creation of a penis.⁹ The first of
5 these planned steps was a complete hysterectomy, or removal of his uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries.
6 In Mr. Minton's case, hysterectomy was medically necessary care to treat his diagnosis of gender
7 dysphoria. This was the professional opinion of Mr. Minton's hysterectomy surgeon and two mental
8 health professionals who counseled Mr. Minton during his transition.

9 **Defendant's Discrimination Against Mr. Minton on the Basis of his Gender Identity**

10 19. After consulting further with his primary care physician and obstetrician/ gynecologist,
11 Dr. Lindsey Dawson, Mr. Minton scheduled his hysterectomy with Dr. Dawson at MSJMC for August
12 30, 2016.

13 20. Dr. Dawson has been practicing as a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist for 11
14 years and has had admitting privileges at MSJMC since 2010. Dr. Dawson regularly performs about 1-2
15 hysterectomies per month at MSJMC.

16 21. Two days prior to Mr. Minton's scheduled surgery, on August 28, 2016, a pre-operation
17 nurse called Mr. Minton to prepare him for the surgery. During that conversation, Mr. Minton
18 mentioned that he is transgender.

19 22. On August 29, a day before his scheduled procedure, Dr. Dawson received a call from
20 MSJMC's surgery department notifying her that Mr. Minton's hysterectomy had been cancelled.
21 Dr. Dawson received further confirmation of the cancellation during a telephone call to MSJMC nurse
22 manager Andrea Markham, and a telephone call and meeting with MSJMC's president, Brian Ivie. Mr.
23 Ivie also stated that Dr. Dawson would never be allowed to perform a hysterectomy on Mr. Minton at
24 MSJMC. According to Mr. Ivie, MSJMC would not allow the hysterectomy to proceed because it was
25

26 ⁹ "Phalloplasty in transgender men involves the creation of a penis using any one of a number of
27 procedures." *Phalloplasty and metaoidioplasty - overview and postoperative considerations*,
28 Center of Excellence in Transgender Health, <http://www.transhealth.ucsf.edu/tcoe?page=guidelines-phalloplasty>.

1 scheduled as part of a course of treatment for gender dysphoria, as opposed to any other medical
2 diagnosis.

3 23. MSJMC's refusal to allow Dr. Dawson to perform Mr. Minton's hysterectomy on August
4 30, 2016 caused Mr. Minton great anxiety and grief. Mr. Minton had no time to spare, as he needed to
5 undergo his hysterectomy three months before his phalloplasty, which was scheduled for November
6 23rd. Mr. Minton had already experienced numerous delays throughout his medical transition, including
7 battles over insurance coverage and scheduling his phalloplasty. As a result, the timing of his
8 hysterectomy was particularly sensitive.

9 24. As an alternative, Mr. Ivie suggested that Dr. Dawson could get emergency admitting
10 privileges at Methodist Hospital, a non-Catholic Dignity Health hospital about 30 minutes away from
11 MSJMC. Dr. Dawson's schedule could not accommodate that alternative immediately.

12 25. Ultimately, Dr. Dawson was able to secure emergency surgical privileges for later in the
13 week, and she performed Mr. Minton's hysterectomy at Methodist Hospital on Friday, September 2.

14 26. Dr. Dawson routinely performs hysterectomies for her patients, and in fact performed
15 another hysterectomy at MSJMC the same day that Mr. Minton's surgery had been scheduled. Other
16 physicians who practice at MSJMC also regularly perform hysterectomies at the hospital for patients
17 who have not been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, for indications such as chronic pelvic pain and
18 uterine fibroids.

19 27. If Defendant is not enjoined from preventing doctors from performing hysterectomy
20 procedures for patients with gender dysphoria in its hospitals, Mr. Minton and others similarly
21 situated—*i.e.*, transgender individuals who suffer from gender dysphoria—will be unlawfully denied
22 access to medical treatment at hospitals run by the largest hospital provider in California.

23 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

24 **(Violation of The Unruh Act, Civ. Code § 51(b))**

25 28. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the allegations of the above paragraphs as though fully
26 set forth herein.

27 29. The Unruh Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in all business establishments.
28

1 Civ. Code § 51(b).

2 30. The Unruh Act defines “sex” to include a person’s gender. “Gender” means sex, and
3 includes a person’s gender identity and gender expression. Civ. Code § 51(e)(5).

4 31. Discrimination against an individual on the basis of his or her gender identity is
5 discrimination on the basis of “sex” under the Unruh Act.

6 32. Defendant prevented Dr. Dawson from performing Mr. Minton’s hysterectomy to treat
7 his diagnosis of gender dysphoria, a medical condition unique to individuals whose gender identity does
8 not conform to the sex they were assigned at birth.

9 33. Defendant does not prohibit physicians at its hospitals from treating other diagnoses with
10 hysterectomy.

11 34. By preventing Dr. Dawson from performing Mr. Minton’s hysterectomy to treat gender
12 dysphoria, Defendant discriminated against Mr. Minton on the basis of his gender identity.

13 35. Defendant’s preventing Dr. Dawson from performing Mr. Minton’s hysterectomy at
14 MSJMC is sex discrimination in violation of California Civil Code § 51(b).

15 36. Defendant’s discriminatory practices caused Plaintiff considerable harm. Therefore, Mr.
16 Minton seeks injunctive relief and statutory damages under the Unruh Act.

17 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

18 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court:

19 A. Enter a declaratory judgment stating that Defendant’s preventing Mr. Minton’s physician
20 from performing his hysterectomy at Mercy violated the Unruh Act, Civil Code § 51(b).

21 B. Enter an order for statutory damages of \$4,000 under the Unruh Act, Civil Code § 52(a).

22 C. Enter an order enjoining Defendant, its agents, employees, successors, and all others
23 acting in concert with them, from (1) discriminating on the basis of gender identity or expression,
24 transgender status, and/or diagnosis of gender dysphoria in the provision of health care services,
25 treatment, and facilities; and (2) preventing doctors from performing hysterectomy procedures in its
26 hospitals on the basis of a diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

27 D. Enter an order requiring Defendant to pay Plaintiff’s attorneys’ fees and costs under Civil
28

1 Code § 52.1(h), Civil Code § 52(a), Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5, and any other applicable statutes.

2 E. Grant Plaintiff any further relief the Court deems just and proper.

3
4 Dated: April 19, 2017

Respectfully Submitted,

5
6 COVINGTON & BURLING LLP

7 By: 

Christine Saunders Haskett
Attorneys for Plaintiff

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9 ACLU FOUNDATION OF NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA, INC.

10
11 By: 

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VERIFICATION

I, Evan Minton, have read paragraphs 9, 17-19, 21, and 23 of this Verified Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief and Statutory Damages in the matter of *Minton v. Dignity Health*. The facts within these paragraphs are within my own personal knowledge and I know them to be true.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

DATED: 4/19/17

Evan Michael Minton

Evan Minton