

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF IDAHO

Abby Davids, MD; K.P.; N.R.; F.F.; J.A.O.G.; and John Doe v. Alex Adams, in his official capacity as Director of the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare; Miren Unsworth, in her official capacity as the Deputy Director of IDHW in charge of Health & Human Services; Elke Shaw-Tulloch, in her official capacity as the administrator of IDHW’s Division of Public Health; Angie Bailey, as Director of the Idaho Bureau of Rural Health & Primary Care; and Raúl Labrador, in his official capacity as the Attorney General of Idaho

Davids v. Adams · No. 1:25-cv-00334-AKB · Decided March 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Idaho grants the patient plaintiffs’ motion to proceed under pseudonyms in a challenge to Idaho’s implementation of H.B. 135 as applied to Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program services. The court finds that public disclosure could expose the plaintiffs to criminal prosecution, immigration consequences, stigma, retaliation, and disclosure of sensitive medical information. The court allows pseudonymity on the public docket while leaving potential disclosure to defense counsel for discovery to be addressed through meet-and-confer and, if necessary, further court relief.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Idaho
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Amanda K. Brailsford
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Idaho
DECIDED	March 30, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-00334-AKB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs moved to proceed under pseudonyms at the outset of the federal action. The district court decided the motion on the parties’ written submissions without oral argument.

STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the Ninth Circuit’s balancing framework for requests to proceed anonymously, weighing the severity, reasonableness, and vulnerability associated with threatened harm against prejudice to the opposing party and the public interest in disclosure.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum decision and order; persuasive value only

TOPICS

civil procedure medical records privacy health law immigration pleadings

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure health law civil rights immigration

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the patient plaintiffs should be permitted to proceed under pseudonyms in the public record.
2. Whether the plaintiffs were entitled to withhold their identities from defense counsel and the Court throughout the litigation.

HOLDINGS

1. The patient plaintiffs may proceed under pseudonyms for purposes of the public record because disclosure could expose them to criminal prosecution and immigration-related consequences and could create risks of stigma, retaliation, and disclosure of highly sensitive medical information.
2. The court did not grant an unconditional right to withhold the plaintiffs’ identities from defense counsel and the Court; instead, any later need for disclosure must be addressed in discovery through a meet-and-confer and, if necessary, appropriate relief from the Court.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The normal presumption in litigation is that the parties must use their real names.” (Analysis)

“To the extent disclosure of Plaintiffs’ identities to defense counsel becomes necessary to proceed in discovery, the parties shall meet and confer to reach an agreement protecting all parties’ interests.” (Order ¶ 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The plaintiffs challenge Idaho’s implementation of H.B. 135 as applied to Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program services. The patient plaintiffs asserted that public disclosure of their identities could expose them to criminal prosecution, immigration consequences, stigma, retaliation, and disclosure of highly sensitive medical information, including HIV status. Defendants accepted pseudonymity for the public record at that stage but

argued that disclosure to defense counsel might later be necessary to test the plaintiffs’ allegations through discovery.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs filed an action challenging Idaho’s implementation of H.B. 135 as applied to Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program services. The patient plaintiffs moved to proceed in pseudonym. Defendants did not oppose pseudonymity on the public docket at that stage but opposed withholding the plaintiffs’ identities from defense counsel and the Court throughout discovery.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Doe v. Kamehameha Sch./Bernice Pauahi Bishop Est., 596 F.3d 1036, 1042 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Does I thru XXIII v. Advanced Textile Corp., 214 F.3d 1058, 1068 (9th Cir. 2000)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF IDAHO ABBY DAVIDS, MD; K.P.; N.R.; F.F.; J.A.O.G.; and JOHN DOE, Case No. 1:25-cv-00334-AKB Plaintiffs, MEMORANDUM DECISION AND v. ORDER ALEX ADAMS, in his official capacity as Director of the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare; MIREN UNSWORTH, in her official capacity as the Deputy Director of IDHW in charge of Health & Human Services; ELKE SHAW-TULLOCH, in her official capacity as the administrator of IDHW’s Division of Public Health; ANGIE BAILEY, as Director of the Idaho Bureau of Rural Health & Primary Care; RAÚL LABRADOR, in his official capacity as the Attorney General of Idaho, Defendants.

Pending is Plaintiffs’ Motion to Proceed in Pseudonym (Dkt. 4). Having reviewed the record and the parties’ submissions, the Court finds that the facts and legal arguments are adequately presented, and that oral argument would not significantly aid its decision-making process, and it decides the motion on the parties’ briefing. Dist. Idaho Loc. Civ. R. 7.1(d)(1)(B); see also Fed.

R. Civ. P. 78(b) (“By rule or order, the court may provide for submitting and determining motions on briefs, without oral hearings.”). BACKGROUND Plaintiffs challenge Idaho’s implementation of H.B. 135 as applied to Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program services. At the outset of the case, the patient plaintiffs moved to proceed in pseudonym (Dkt. 4).

In support, Plaintiffs assert that disclosure of their identities would expose them to risks of criminal prosecution, immigration consequences, stigma, and retaliation, and would reveal highly sensitive medical information, including their HIV status (Dkt. 4-1). Defendants do not oppose

Plaintiffs' request to proceed in pseudonym for purposes of the public record at this stage of the litigation.

Defendants oppose the motion, however, to the extent Plaintiffs seek to withhold their identities from Defendants and the Court throughout the case, arguing they are entitled to test Plaintiffs' assertions, including through discovery if necessary (Dkt. 39).

On reply, Plaintiffs respond that, if limited disclosure later becomes necessary, the parties and the Court can determine an appropriate way to handle the issue that protects all parties' interests (Dkt. 41). ANALYSIS Rule 10(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides that "the title of the complaint must name all the parties." Rule 17(a) likewise provides that "an action must be prosecuted in the name of the real party in interest." "The normal presumption in litigation is that the parties must use their real names." *Doe v. Kamehameha Sch./Bernice Pauahi Bishop Est.*, 596 F.3d 1036, 1042 (9th Cir.

2010). The Ninth Circuit, however, has identified circumstances in which a court may permit a plaintiff to proceed using a pseudonym, including when: "(1) identification creates a risk of retaliatory physical or mental harm, (2) anonymity is necessary 'to preserve privacy in a matter of sensitive and highly personal nature,' and (3) the anonymous party 'would be compelled... to admit [his or her] intention to engage in illegal conduct, thereby risking criminal prosecution.'" *Id.* (quoting *Does I thru XXIII v. Advanced Textile Corp.*, 214 F.3d 1058, 1068 (9th Cir.

2000)). In determining whether to allow a party to proceed anonymously over the opposing party's objection, a court balances "the severity of the threatened harm, the reasonableness of the anonymous party's fears, and the anonymous party's vulnerability to such retaliation," against "the prejudice to the opposing party and the public's interest in knowing the party's identity." *Id.* Here, Plaintiffs' request to proceed in pseudonym meets at least two of the situations envisioned by the Ninth Circuit.

Disclosure of Plaintiffs' identities would compel them to reveal information that they contend could expose them to criminal prosecution and immigration-related consequences. Further, identification in the public record may create a risk of stigma, retaliation, and disclosure of highly sensitive medical information.

For those reasons, the Court will allow the patient plaintiffs' identities to remain anonymous for purposes of the public record in this case. Defendants' stated concern is narrower. They do not oppose pseudonymity on the public docket at this stage but contend that disclosure to defense counsel may later be necessary to test Plaintiffs' allegations.

The Court agrees that this issue, if it arises, can be addressed in the context of discovery. The better course is not to deny pseudonymity now, but to allow the parties to meet and confer

regarding any later disclosure that may become necessary and the protections that should govern such disclosure. ORDER Based on the foregoing, the Court hereby ORDERS: 1.

Plaintiffs' Motion to Proceed in Pseudonym (Dkt. 4) is GRANTED. 2. The patient plaintiffs may proceed in pseudonym for purposes of the public record in this case. 3. To the extent disclosure of Plaintiffs' identities to defense counsel becomes necessary to proceed in discovery, the parties shall meet and confer to reach an agreement protecting all parties' interests.

If the parties are unable to reach agreement, they may seek appropriate relief from the Court.

DATED: March 30, 2026 SS Amanda K. Brailsford icy U.S. District Court Judge

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