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*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics
State Senator André Jacques
March 3, 2021*

Chairman Wichgers and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you as the author of Assembly Bill 24.

Citizens have a fundamental right to expect that their Constitutionally-protected religious freedom will be respected by officials at all levels of government, including the right to freely worship unencumbered by the government. Unfortunately, religious liberty has been trampled on by some unelected bureaucrats and elected officials in their response to COVID-19. With facilities like liquor stores and abortion clinics previously recognized by public health departments as essential businesses and being allowed to operate without harassment while churches and other places of worship were shut down, we must ensure that people's right to freely assemble and worship are not impeded.

Enacting AB 24 will prohibit a repeat of this scenario and ensure that the response to COVID-19 will not again threaten religious expression and those who gather in places of worship as a faith community to pray for our nation.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 24.



WISCONSIN FAMILY ACTION
Marriage|Family|Life|Liberty

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 24
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND ETHICS
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2021
JULAIN K. APPLING, PRESIDENT

Thank you, Chairman Wichgers and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 24. Wisconsin Family Action is testifying today in support of this bill. Assembly Bill 24 is fundamentally about ensuring that places of worship receive equal treatment during a public crisis, allowing them to remain open on the same terms as other businesses and services that are deemed essential.

Last year on Wednesday, April 8, our office began receiving numerous calls, texts, and emails from pastors around the state inquiring about the legality of how local health officials were interpreting Governor Evers' most recent Executive Order and associated Emergency Order #12 related to COVID-19.

The timing of this flurry of churches contacting us was significant: Good Friday was two days away and Easter Sunday four days away. Pastors were being told by some local officials that they not only could they not meet in their buildings, but that they could not even hold drive-in services in their parking lots with those attending staying in their cars. Some pastors told us local officials had told them if they held a drive-in service, law enforcement would be present and would fine everyone in attendance for being in violation of the law. Pastors and ministry leaders were rightly concerned about this over-reach by local health authorities and reached out to us for help.

In response to the church outcry, on we worked with Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty and Attorney Michael Dean to contact the governor and request that he clarify for local officials the intent and reach of his most recent Executive Order. A copy of the letter sent on Thursday, April 9, is attached for your reference, but to quickly summarize the contents, the letter reminds the governor of Article I, Section 18 of our state constitution that clearly protects religious freedom in our state and proceeds to give a legal analysis of the governor's order—an analysis that highlights “essential business” as indicated in the order, included places of worship and did not include prohibiting drive-in services. However, the letter also makes a strong case that local officials taking such actions would be impermissible specifically under the Wisconsin constitution.

In particular, the letter points out that the governor's Emergency Order #12 did not, and I'm quoting, *“limit the number of vehicles that may gather in parking lots of grocery stores, restaurants, gas stations, banks, and many other establishments. It specifically authorizes patrons to enter establishments such as bars and liquor stores to purchase packaged goods and other merchandise. It specifically authorizes higher education to exercise its own discretion in determining what constitute ‘essential functions as determined by the institution.’ And it offers blanket authorization to individuals ‘[t]o engage in outdoor activity’ including ‘walking, biking, hiking, or running’ (provided social distancing guidelines are followed). The Constitution requires that religious exercise be prized above these other activities, to say nothing of treated on equal footing with them. We understand the Governor’s responsibility to facilitate the safety of all Wisconsinites in the midst of this pandemic. But we cannot lose our heads. And state and local actors cannot use the occasion of a public health threat to run roughshod over the right to the free exercise of religion while permitting activities that are functionally equivalent from a public health and safety perspective.”*

I am pleased to report that the Governor did quite quickly issue a clarifying statement shortly after he received this letter from the attorneys and a statement from our organization indicating the contacts we had with pastors statewide on this issue. But this clarification does not mitigate the need for this proposed law.

In essence, local officials have from time to time during this virus crisis and in various places around our state put burdens and restrictions on churches that were not placed on other “essential services” in the community. The law does not allow for this selective treatment.

Assembly Bill 24 is needed to clarify that local health officials do not have the authority to close places of worship or forbid gatherings in places of worship during this coronavirus outbreak. We are not impugning the motives of local officials. We understand they have the authority to protect health and public safety, and we believe that was and is the principal concern and motive for some of the stringent restrictions that have been put in place particularly on places of worship during this current health crisis. However, the First Amendment, including the free exercise of religion and the freedom to peaceably assemble is never suspended. Nor is our state constitution suspended in a crisis.

At a minimum, the law requires government to treat religious organizations the same as comparable secular organizations. When the government treats churches worse than bars and taverns and any other business enterprises in its COVID-19 response, it violates the Constitution. The Supreme Court has ruled that disfavoring churches and religious organizations is “odious to our Constitution.”

It is in our communities’ and our state’s best interest to keep our churches open. Religious organizations provide essential services to our society. Religious services are an integral part of the exercise of religion for thousands of Wisconsin’s faithful, and religious organizations provide charitable services to thousands of Wisconsin citizens in need. Basic needs of our state’s citizens, both spiritual and physical, cannot be met without these services.

Places of worship provide a unique benefit to our society. They provide essential services that are not only deeply needed by their communities, but they provide millions of Americans the means to exercise their religion and live out the obligations of their faith.

Worship services are essential to Americans’ mental health. In December 2020, Gallup released the results of a mental health survey that noted a nine percent decline in people who say their mental health is excellent from 2019 to 2020.¹ Notably, those who attended religious services weekly did not experience this negative shift; rather, they experienced a four percent *increase* in excellent mental health. By contrast, those who seldom or never attended religious services saw a thirteen percent *decrease* in excellent mental health. While many factors likely contributed to the survey results, it is clear that religious services have a beneficial effect on mental health.

Our support of this bill in no way means we believe churches should not exercise great discernment and caution in how they conduct in-person services, but just as other businesses or essential services have been given latitude to decide for themselves what they should do to protect the health and safety of those who participate in their programs or services, so churches should be, indeed constitutionally must be, afforded that same latitude.

Assembly Bill 24 is necessary to make it clear the limit of authority local officials have when it comes to closing places of worship during this health crisis. The one limitation of this bill is that it should not be limited to the coronavirus situation but should be amended to apply in any declared emergency, thus eliminating the possibility of this matter having to again be made the subject of a legislative proposal in order to ensure the constitutional rights of churches and their congregants are respected.

We urge the committee to expeditiously pass this bill and move it to the full Assembly where we urge swift passage.

Thank you for your time and attention today and for your careful consideration of our position on this important bill.

¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/327311/americans-mental-health-ratings-sink-new-low.aspx>



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April 9, 2020

Governor Tony Evers
115 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

To Governor Tony Evers:

As we approach Good Friday and Easter Sunday—for many Wisconsinites, the two most sacred religious observances of the year—we are writing to request immediate clarification from your office as to whether your Emergency Order #12 (also known as the “Safer at Home Order”) prevents outdoor, drive-up religious services conducted in accordance with social distancing guidelines. While a number of legal opinions, including an April 8, 2020 Wisconsin Legislative Council memo, have properly concluded that such services are permitted under the Order, some local government officials are using the Order to ban Wisconsinites from responsibly observing these holy days.

Even temporarily putting aside the constitutional issues presented by Art. I, § 18 of the Wisconsin Constitution, which provides that exercise of conscience and religious faith are paramount rights and liberties guaranteed all Wisconsin citizens, our independent assessment of the Order confirms that drive-up religious services are clearly and explicitly permitted by the Order. The Order specifically defines as an “Essential Business[] [or] Operation[]” to which any person may travel for purposes of access all “[r]eligious facilities, entities, groups, and gatherings . . . except that any gathering shall include fewer than 10 people *in a room or confined space at a time* and individuals shall adhere to Social Distancing Requirements as much as possible.” (Emphasis added.) Patently, a parking lot is not a “room or confined space.” This is the extent of the needed analysis. A drive-up Good Friday or Easter Sunday service—where, for example, attendees stay in their cars and play the service over their radio—is permitted under the Order, and municipalities that attempt to enforce a contrary rule are violating its terms.

We do not presume that your order is intended to ban such services. It is possible that local units of government have gone too far. But interpreting the order to impose such a restriction would raise grave constitutional questions. Article I, § 18 of the Wisconsin Constitution provides that “[t]he right of every person to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of conscience shall never be infringed; . . . nor shall any control of, or interference with, the rights of conscience be permitted.” Wisconsin’s religious liberty protections are much stronger than those that obtain at the federal level—any state government action substantially burdening the right to free exercise must be the *least restrictive means* of furthering a *compelling* government interest. *State v. Miller*, 202 Wis. 2d 56, 66, 549 N.W.2d 235 (1996) (emphases added).

If interpreted to prohibit drive-up religious services, the Order would easily flunk this test. It does not, for example, limit the number of vehicles that may gather in parking lots of grocery stores, restaurants, gas stations, banks, and many other establishments. It specifically authorizes patrons

to enter establishments such as bars and liquor stores to purchase packaged goods and other merchandise. It specifically authorizes higher education to exercise its own discretion in determining what constitute “essential functions as determined by the institution.” And it offers blanket authorization to individuals “[t]o engage in outdoor activity” including “walking, biking, hiking, or running” (provided social distancing guidelines are followed). The Constitution requires that religious exercise be prized *above* these other activities, to say nothing of treated on equal footing with them.

We understand the Governor’s responsibility to facilitate the safety of all Wisconsinites in the midst of this pandemic. But we cannot lose our heads. And state and local actors cannot use the occasion of a public health threat to run roughshod over the right to the free exercise of religion while permitting activities that are functionally equivalent from a public health and safety perspective.

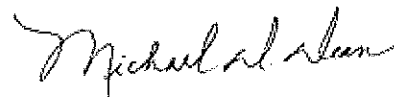
James Madison wrote in his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* that “the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him . . . is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society.” We ask our government officials to respect the good faith and judgment of leaders in Christian and other faith communities in the same way as they do that of leaders in higher education and other “Essential Business and Operations.” A “drive-in” service in which congregants remain in their cars and practice social distancing is permitted under the terms of Executive Order #12 and protected by our state constitution. Because some local units of government do not seem to understand this we ask that you publicly clarify that religious adherents may celebrate Good Friday and Easter safely, in community, free of government threat, and in keeping with their rights of conscience and the sacred duties they owe their Creator.

Please respond by 2 PM today in writing clarifying your understanding of whether the Order permits drive-up religious services to proceed as planned. We are encouraging all whose free exercise rights are burdened by the actions of local officials to contact us. Your urgent attention to this matter will provide much-needed clarity to religious groups around the state and prevent litigation that may result from the confusion on this issue.

Sincerely,



Richard M. Esenberg
President & General Counsel
Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty



Michael D. Dean
Principal
Michael D. Dean, LLC



WISCONSIN FAMILY COUNCIL
Marriage|Family|Life|Liberty

April 9, 2020

Honorable Tony Evers, Governor
Delivered by email & in person
State Capitol, 115 E
Madison WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers:

On March 26, Wisconsin Family Council hosted a conference call with over 450 Wisconsin faith leaders to discuss your Emergency Order No.12.

Many of those same leaders are now calling us regarding press releases issued yesterday by county health departments around the state that conflict with your Order. Because the counties' statements are detailed and uniform, it appears they were coordinated with your office with your approval.


I have reviewed the letter Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty just sent to you asking that you correct the county departments or clarify your intentions, and I'm writing to request that you immediately issue guidance for citizens and faith leaders who are confused by the counties' statements and the implications for Holy Week.

Good Friday and Easter are the most sacred observances of the year in the Christian faith, to be celebrated in community, not in isolation. We ask that you issue guidance immediately so that Christians may celebrate Good Friday and Easter without threat of prosecution, in keeping with rights of conscience protected by the Wisconsin Constitution and the sacred duties they owe their Lord.

Correcting the counties now would show respect not only for Christians' rights of conscience, but also for conscience rights of other faith communities and of those who practice no faith at all.

We encourage faith leaders and citizens to pray for wisdom for you and other officials in this challenging time and thank you in advance for your immediate response.

Sincerely,



Julaine K. Appling
President

March 3, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bruce Cournoyer, the Pastor of Calvary Bible Fellowship here in Madison. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you regarding **Assembly Bill 24** - the bill that would prohibit health officials from closing or forbidding gatherings in places of worship to control outbreaks and epidemics of the Covid-19 Virus.

As churches we have the privilege of loving and serving people in our communities. We have a responsibility, first, before our God, to meet the needs of people around us. Caring for the needs of people is a huge responsibility that we take very seriously. Deaths, burdens of life, problems, addictions, sickness, despair, and many other spiritual as well as physical needs are part of our mission to help people. Covid has only added to and magnified these needs. As a local church, we seek to come along side and bear one another's burdens fulfilling a Biblical command in Gal. 6:2. **We see our churches not as optional; but as essential.** Many folks look forward to the time they spend at church worshipping and fellowshiping with others. For many, their church family can be closer geographically and emotionally than their biological families.

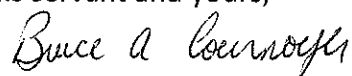
First, I would like to remind you of the **Constitutionally- protected right** to freely worship that we have in our state and federal government. Second, I want to share with you the **sense of belonging a church can give.** Our churches are like close and loving families who seek to protect each other. We take it very seriously to protect the health of our church family. Every activity we as humans do, involves some inherent risk; for example, driving our cars we could possibly get in an accident etc. We have taken great care to ensure we are cleaning our church, wearing face coverings etc. in order to keep people healthy. When folks are not feeling well they stay home to protect the church family that they love and care for. Because of this although we have had a handful of positive cases in our church, none of those were contracted at church or passed on to any others at church. In addition to all these safety measures, we have provided online options for those at risk or that are fearful to come in person. But nothing online comes close to the ministry the church has in person. Our church is not a building but a group of people. We are continually seeking to minister to the needs of those in our communities while still loving them enough to keep them safe.

It has been amazing to me to see the joy that being together in services brings to those who are lonely, isolated or struggling. **I believe churches are essential** to the well-being of our communities. The founding fathers of the United States saw the importance of guaranteeing religious liberty for all and the freedom to assemble without interference from the government.

We pastors and churches ask that you please support **Assembly Bill 24** to protect our churches and places of worship from interference from public health officials. We care much for the health and well-being of every person who walks through our doors while seeking to help each one spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Thank you for your time in listening today and for all that you do to represent the people of Wisconsin. We pray regularly for each of you elected officials in the difficult task you carry. In the same way, please allow us as pastors and churches to fulfill the critical and difficult task we have given our lives to carry out.

His servant and yours,



Pastor Bruce A. Cournoyer



ProLife
LOVE. FOR LIFE. WI.

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 24: prohibiting local health officers from closing or forbidding gatherings in places of worship to control outbreaks and epidemics of the 2019 novel coronavirus

**Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics
By Matt Sande, Director of Legislation**

March 3, 2021

Good morning Chairman Wichgers and Committee members. My name is Matt Sande and I serve as director of legislation for Pro-Life Wisconsin. Thank you for this opportunity to express our support for Assembly Bill (AB) 24, legislation prohibiting local health officers from closing or forbidding gatherings in places of worship to control outbreaks and epidemics of the 2019 novel coronavirus.

Pro-Life Wisconsin exists for a singular purpose: to restore and protect the unalienable right to life of all human beings in our state, whether born or preborn, young, old, disabled or terminally ill. We affirm that the right to life exists from the moment of conception and extends until natural death; this truth being handed down by God and articulated in the Declaration of Independence.

Believing that "it is never the will of the Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18:14), Pro-Life Wisconsin is a Christian organization relying on God to change hearts and minds toward His most precious creation of human life. In communities throughout our state, Pro-Life Wisconsin local affiliate groups change hearts and minds by spreading the Gospel of Life in their communities.

Pro-Life Wisconsinites are engaged in a spiritual war against the culture of death, exemplified most horribly by the twin evils of abortion and assisted suicide that kill both the young and old with impunity. Our members fortify themselves in this epic battle by faithfully attending their communal places of worship and living sacramental lives. When they are cut off from this spiritual sustenance, it is difficult to be effective in their missionary work.

Just as food feeds the body, worship feeds the soul. Both are essential, and both must be treated as such. Uninhibited access to our grocery stores is no more important than unrestricted access to our churches. Assembly Bill 24 recognizes and reinforces this reality. Moreover, the bill upholds our unqualified First Amendment rights to freely exercise our religious beliefs and freely assemble.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions committee members may have for me.



Wednesday, March 03, 2021

Dear Committee Members,

I appreciate all of you working so hard on behalf of the citizens of our state. Thank you for taking the time to read this. I'm writing to encourage you on the importance of SB 24.

We are a Church with a Preschool and K-12 School. We are located on 36 acres in Town of Delafield. If you drive to Milwaukee, you will see our campus on the south side of I-94 as you enter Waukesha.

I am sure you understand why SB24 is extremely important to all churches in Wisconsin. A "Church" is a "Called out Assembly", meaning in order for us to be the "Church", we must "assemble" in person. Online meetings may work for a short time, but failure to consistently assemble is a failure of the "Church" to do its work. Assembling together is a main tenant of our faith. To not assemble goes against the will and desire of our Lord as taught in the Bible.

We believe the Church is essential, and no government agency has the unlimited power to force churches to close indefinitely. As we all know so well our First Amendment states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the exercise thereof."

In my experience this past year, ALL the churches in our area DID want to cooperate with the government in mitigating the spread of Covid. I do not know of a single church in our area that was disrespectful or flippant about following the guidelines setup by our government. We have followed all the rules and went to extreme lengths and great expense to adhere to CDC guidelines to protect our students and members. The Church desires to work alongside of and peacefully with our government both on the state and local level.

Covid lockdowns have led to an alarming rise in overdose and suicides in our state. One of the main outreach programs that our church offers is an "Addiction Recovery Program". This program meets in person on Fridays where we work with "Functioning Addicts" in our area. Hundreds of people have come to our meetings. Many people have found freedom and recovery. I'm proud that our community calls DaySpring the "Church of the Former Addict". This year, due to Covid and the "Stay Home" orders, we have seen a spike in our addiction recovery students "falling off the wagon" and getting deeper into their addiction. This year alone, we have had 3 students die of overdose and suicide. In comparison, we haven't had an overdose or suicide death among our students for the past 4 years. Assembling together in person is essential to people that struggle with mental health and addictive tendencies.

Thank you again for your service to our great state.

Daniel Reehoff

Founder & Lead Pastor

Pastor Daniel Reehoff

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*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves:
it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*



CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Public Hearing on Assembly Bill 24

Pastor Robert J. Loggans
Calvary Baptist Church
792 Milford Street
Watertown, Wisconsin 53094
920-261-7237

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Pastor Bob Loggans, representing Calvary Baptist Church of Watertown, Wisconsin. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. I come before you today to simply state that **church is essential**. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, churches are a valuable resource. So, I ask you to support Assembly Bill 24.

According to an NPR, Wisconsin Public Radio report entitled "Pandemic's Emotional Hammer Hits Hard"

"Nearly a quarter of people in the United States are experiencing symptoms of depression...that's nearly three times the number before the Covid-19 pandemic began...Traumas linked to pandemic have included ongoing anxiety and fear of catching the disease, and grief over the illness or loss of loved ones as well as the economic fallout." The article continues: "Interpersonal support is the single best predictor of human resilience."

As local churches, we have the privilege and opportunity to serve as dynamic loving communities who share one another's burdens, whether those burdens are mental, emotional, financial or most importantly spiritual. The most meaningful and transformative community is the local church. The church is called to sacrificially care for one another including those most vulnerable. (Galatians 6:2) We love others because we have been shown such incredible love by God Himself. This message of love and care is laced throughout the very fabric of Scripture. And COVID has certainly afforded us the opportunity to care for others.

I recall this past November when a family of five in our community reached out to us. The wife and mother serves in the health care community as an essential worker. When she and her husband both came down with Covid, we as a church provided food and help for the family during their time of quarantine.

I also recall a dear man from Watertown who was hospitalized in November of 2020 in the ICU - dying of Covid. We provided the family with food, comfort, monies, and gift cards – even treats for his grandkids. He asked me to come to the hospital to pray with him. I visited him both in the hospital and in Angel’s Grace hospice. He was hospitalized for over 60 days. During that time our church family provided tremendous support during their time of crisis. I officiated his funeral 7 ½ weeks ago.

I recall yet another dear elderly lady with no family in the state of Wisconsin. This past year when she fell ill, we delivered food, provided finances, prayed, read Scripture, and I was by her bedside reading Scripture when she died in the nursing home. We have contacted numerous others in our community to offer transportation, food, money, or other services as they have experienced this horrific pandemic.

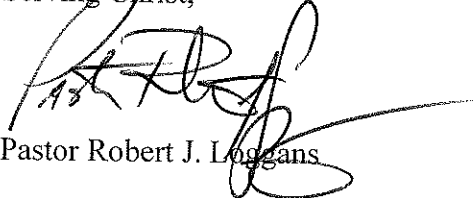
Our counseling of members of the community has increased. I received a frantic phone call from a woman who is overwhelmed with all of the challenges of the pandemic. We talked. She just needed someone to talk to and pray for her and encourage her from the Scriptures as to how to cope with the challenges of the pandemic.

You see, Church is essential. We need to maintain opportunities to strengthen face-to-face relational bridges when the virus wants to create a social barrier. I have had numerous people say to me, “I just need to be in a church service. I need the interaction with people.”

Yes, Church is essential. The founding fathers of the United States of America understood that the church is essential and therefore they guaranteed the freedom of religion and assembly in the Constitution. I find no exceptions for pandemics in the first amendment. I find no granting to unelected officials such authority as to close churches and houses of worship. We at Calvary have spent hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to make sure we are doing all we can to follow the health recommendations as requested by our state and local authorities. It is our deep desire to keep our congregation safe.

So once again I request you support Assembly Bill 24 to guarantee that churches and houses of worship stay open to minister effectively to our hurting society.

Serving Christ,



Pastor Robert J. Loggans



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Chuck Wichgers, Chair
Members, Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics

FROM: Kim Vercauteren, Executive Director, Wisconsin Catholic Conference *Kim Vercauteren*

DATE: March 3, 2021

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 24, Prohibitions on Places of Worship Closures

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Wisconsin in support of Assembly Bill 24, which prohibits local health officers from closing or forbidding gatherings in places of worship during the current pandemic.

Faith is essential. As a people of faith, we are called to serve God and all who are made in the image and likeness of God. For this reason, faith is social. It is a shared communion with our neighbor and cannot be practiced in a vacuum or in isolation. Worship with others is the necessary exercise of faith and protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

As Catholics, we are obligated to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that “Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice.” (CCC no. 2181) In the early months of the pandemic, serious health concerns coupled with limited knowledge regarding the coronavirus transmission compelled our parishes to dramatically alter how individuals could participate in the Mass and other religious gatherings. As a people of faith, we quickly had to find ways to balance our obligation to attend Mass with the duty to care for our neighbor. Religious in-person gatherings were of limited capacity, more services were provided through online platforms, and the Roman Catholic bishops of Wisconsin instituted dispensations for those who could not attend Mass in person.

Over the past ten months, Catholic dioceses and parishes throughout Wisconsin have been able to resume public worship by adhering to strict safety standards and by restricting access to services for those who are symptomatic, sick, or at risk of serious illness. We know that as we meet the challenges of this pandemic, we have a responsibility to provide a means of worship and religious expression that does not endanger the health and safety of others. However, as faith leaders we have demonstrated that we can provide this public and necessary ministry while making modifications to preserve public health and safety.

Allowing public health authorities to close places of worship is a drastic measure that fails to recognize the great need that many have for mental and spiritual care, especially during these challenging times. Catholics find solace in the Mass. As this pandemic continues and the frailties of our social order become ever more evident, there is an increasing need for worship,

the Eucharist, and prayer, especially for those mourning the loss of a loved one. We urge you to support Assembly Bill 24 and make certain faith leaders can continue to minister to those most in need of solace during times of strife.

Finally, please know Wisconsin's bishops remain committed to assisting those stricken by this pandemic and to serve all in our state during these trying times. The people of Wisconsin, and those who diligently serve them, remain in our thoughts and prayers. As one body in Christ, we will overcome the present moment and restore our communities.

In support of AB 23, 24, 25

Hello. My husband is the sole bread winner in our home. The company he works for is contracted under one that has publicly stated it wants to force mandatory Covid vaccinations on all their employees, but for several reasons he would be unable to take the vaccine. This would mean the very real possibility that without this law of protection in place, he would lose his job of over 30 years and be without an income to support our family. So we really appreciate your work to protect we the people of Wisconsin and pray this protection passes in our State!!

We also believe an individual should not be forced to take the vaccines for the following reasons:

No one should be concerned about working with someone who hasn't taken the vaccine because taking the vaccine does not reduce the chance of getting or spreading Covid.

DISCLOSURE 1:

High profile doctors/scientists * do not claim the SARS-CoV-2 vaccinations will grant you immunity from the disease - nor do they help stop spread the disease!!! Only that your case may be milder and prevent you from dying. Yet according to the CDC, your chance of dying is already INCREDIBLY low. (Statistics further on.) As there are always new strains of the virus, there will always be new experimental vaccines chasing the new strains.

***The Surgeon General, Dr. Jerome Adams, who told everyone on his interview on Good Morning America** about the vaccines last month:

“We don't know yet whether they will prevent infection, but they could prevent you from being in the hospital and ultimately passing from this virus. Still incredibly important to get vaccinated. But we're going to need to **continue to still wear our masks, wash our hands, watch our distance...**with the assistance of these great vaccines.”

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/video/us-surgeon-general-shares-latest-facts-covid-19-74711931>

***According to Dr. Anthony Fauci**, he explained on more than one occasion that it is unknown if the vaccine provides any kind of immunity and the main goal for coronavirus vaccines is **not to block COVID-19 infections**, but to hopefully reduce your symptoms if you get it. (I will say that most healthy people already feel their Covid case is no more severe than the common cold.)

***In the Business Insider on Dec 29, 2020, the World Health Organization's Chief Scientist, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan** said there was not yet enough evidence from vaccine trials "to be confident that it's going to prevent people from actually getting the infection and therefore being able to pass it on."

<https://www.businessinsider.com/who-says-no-evidence-coronavirus-vaccine-prevent-transmissions-2020-12>

*** Attorney and Board Certified Emergency Physician, Dr. Simone Gold** (who recommends normal vaccines) replied when patients asked if she would recommend the Covid vaccine:

“Its really irrational to take a brand new, untested, untried technology from a company that is completely shielded from immunity.”

<https://lbry.tv/@Arkeadius:a/nwnw20210114:c>

DISCLOSURE 2:

The FDA has NOT approved SARS-CoV-2 vaccines. It is in its investigation stage only!! Again, the FDA has only issued an FDA Emergency Use Authorization, which is not the same. An FDA EUA **allows the use of unapproved medical products** in case of an emergency. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press->

DISCLOSURE 3

SARS-CoV-2 vaccines are EXPERIMENTAL. It is experimental biological agents. There has not been sufficient time for long-term animal/human studies to determine the adverse effects of this vaccine. Thus, those getting vaccinated **ARE the lab rats and will be placed into a Pharmacovigilance Tracking System.** YOU are their extended clinical trials that will test the risks – and see if its safe for others in the future. If that is your personal calling, go for it! We need brave people like that who volunteer.
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7685056/#ce.section_hsr_sjj_vnbttitle “How to ensure we can track and trace global use of COVID-19 vaccines?”

Merck has stopped developing their Covid vaccines and trying to address drugs that help the immune response calm down: **“Vaccine manufacturer Merck has abandoned development of two coronavirus vaccines, saying that after extensive research it was concluded that the shots offered less protection than just contracting the virus itself and developing antibodies.”**
<https://summit.news/2021/01/26/merck-scraps-covid-vaccines-says-its-more-effective-to-get-the-virus-and-recover/>

DISCLOSURE 4:

You may have an extreme reaction or adverse long term side effects. Here are a few of the reactions real people have experienced so far to the SARS-CoV-2 vaccines, including, but not limited to the following:

- ✓ **DEATH** (181 and climbing as of two weeks ago, 1/15/21, according to VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting Systems). The data covers 7,844 cases, including 181 deaths . The largest amount of deaths occurred in people over the age of 75.

Search Results

From the 1/15/2021 release of VAERS data:

Found 181 cases where Vaccine is COVID19 and Patient Died

Table

↓ Age	Count	↑ ↓ Percent
17-44 Years	5	2.76%
44-65 Years	29	16.02%
65-75 Years	25	13.81%
75+ Years	87	48.07%
Unknown	35	19.34%
TOTAL	181	100%

“There was at least one death recorded of an unborn baby dying just after the mother received an experimental mRNA Pfizer shot while pregnant: “I was 28 weeks and 5 days pregnant when I received the first dose of the COVID19 vaccine. Two days later (12/25/2020 in the afternoon), I noticed decreased motion of the baby. The baby was found to not have a heartbeat in the early am on 12/26/2020 and I delivered a 2lb 7oz nonviable female fetus at 29 weeks gestation.” ([Source.](#))

- ✓ HOWEVER, delayed death is an even bigger concern (see Antibody Dependent Enhancement)
- ✓ Partial or complete **paralysis**
- ✓ Allergic reactions to the point of needing to be resuscitated (allergies, among them to bees)
- ✓ Horribly ill so their doctors advised that they should NOT receive the second shot (that can't be good, what do you do at that point?)

- ✓ **Unknown Risk of Antibody Dependent Enhancement!** Basically, this is a horrible situation that dramatically increases your risk of dying from contracting Covid AFTER being vaccinated, where before you had little to no chance of dying! (and remember the vaccine does not prevent you from contracting Covid.) Dr. James Todaro on a news interview said he was very concerned about Antibody Dependent Enhancement (ADE), which sounds good, but isn't. He explains why:

“When a vaccinated person comes into contact with the virus, with different strains of the virus, they actually have a far worse outcome, potentially resulting in **death**. Whereas if they did not get the vaccine and they encountered that virus in the wild, they would have **done just fine**. And we've seen this with multiple other viruses, multiple other vaccines, that are still in development and got yanked from the market **for that reason**. And this is a concern that was published in *Nature*, *Science Magazine*, all throughout this past summer, and it seems like a lot of the experts are now completely dismissing this, and just throwing out the marketing, the public message that this is a safe and effective vaccine. There are definitely concerns; and you should weigh those concerns with **your** actual risk of dying from Covid 19 which is INCREDIBLY small in a large part of the population.”

Lets talk about your risk of surviving Covid if you contract it and are NOT treated, according to the CDC – so if you receive treatment, your survival rate would be even higher than these statistics:

Age 0-19	99.997% survival
Age 20-49	99.98%
Age 50-69	99.5%
Age 70 +	95% (Many of the people that died in this category of influenza and pneumonia were labeled as Covid deaths. Interestingly Dr. Lee Merrit points out that:

2020 Covid “viral/flu” season America went through – including New York – had a 99.991% survival rate compared to the 2019 non-Covid flu season that had a 99.992% survival rate. It is only .001% difference!!

https://www.americasfrontlinedoctors.com/custom_videos/newsmax-national-report-dr-simone-gold-and-dr-james-todaro/video

Brilliant Dr. Lee Merrit, spinal surgeon, former President of the Association of American Physicians & Surgeons, explains that the US has NEVER made it through an animal study (cats, ferrets, etc) to produce a vaccine for this type of virus. **ALL the animals died. They seemed to accept the vaccine fine, but later when they were re-exposed to the disease, because of the vaccine, their immune system didn't recognize the virus as a threat and they died of ADE – overwhelmed with sepsis and cardiac arrest.** We have no track record of success in this type of vaccine in animal studies.

Again no one is stopping someone from participating in an experimental biological vaccine, but why is there such an agenda to MANDATE people undergo this vaccination – even *against their will*?

That's why I believe these bills are so important.

Regardless of whether we personally accept or reject the vaccine, if someone wants to do something to your body that you don't want done, you (rightly) KNOW that decision is yours, not theirs, to make. When personally threatened, we all feel strongly that our individual right to our body must be protected at all costs and in all times. **If someone is forced to have something done to their body, that is not a free society and is in violation of that person's rights.** If someone chooses to have the Covid vaccination, that is their right. If someone chooses not to have the Covid vaccination, that is also their right, and both must be honored AND TOLERATED WITHOUT CENSORSHIP.

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine professor Dr. William Schaffner remarked:

“Skepticism about something as new as this vaccine is reasonable whether you're a health care worker or not. It's a brand-new virus and brand-new vaccines developed with brand-new technologies. What could go wrong?”

DISCLOSURE 5:

PREP Act ensures Pharmaceutical companies are legally exempt from all liability – and so is the FDA. You have NO legal recourse.

An employer may pay us to work for them, but that doesn't mean they can force something to be done to our bodies. Touching on the employer, I would question the wisdom or even the practical business sense of any company mandating ALL their employees to do something experimental with unknown risk factors, and I'm not speaking only of potential lawsuits and increasing health insurance premiums. Since there are no long-term clinical trials yet, what if there **are** a lot of employees with adverse reactions from the vaccine – or God forbid, death from ADE in the days and years ahead? **You could lose a substantial portion of your work force.** It could be a good thing to have those who refused the experimental vaccine still employed to pick up the slack instead of happy in new jobs elsewhere.

In conclusion, in regards to state officials ordering churches to close during Covid. The statistics show that suicides, drug & alcohol abuse, domestic violence, etc has increased with all the lockdown restrictions, social distancing, and dealing with a masked society. There is special concern for the generation of masked children being raised to fear everyone around them. Churches are VERY essential to the mental health and well being of the communities they minister to.

But even from a constitutional perspective, The 1st Amendment says,
“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...or the right of the people peaceably to assemble.”

And it doesn't say except in cases of smallpox with a 60% survival rate or in cases of Covid with a 99% survival rate. There are no exceptions for the right to peacefully assemble at church.

So thank you for protecting our Constitutional rights with these bills, I'm 100% in favor!

Thank you,
Dominique Uhl
Mukwonago, WI