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*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Human Services, Children and Families
State Senator André Jacque
January 21, 2021*

Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you as the author of Senate Bill 7.

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 SB 7 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 Senate Bill 7.



WISCONSIN FAMILY ACTION
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 7
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2021
JULAIN K. APPLING, PRESIDENT

Thank you, Chairman Jacque and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 7. Wisconsin Family Action is testifying today in support of this bill. Senate Bill 7 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 related 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, 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 attending 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.

Senate Bill 7 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.

Senate Bill 7 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 that we would suggest it be amended is that it should not be limited to the coronavirus situation but be made 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 Senate 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.

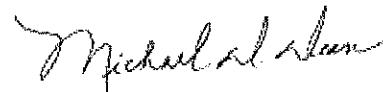
James Madison wrote in his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* that “the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him . . . is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society.” 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



January 21, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Wayne Van Gelderen, Pastor of Falls Baptist Church in Menomonee Falls. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you concerning Senate Bill 7. The Scripture definition of a “church” is an assembly. We take our definition from Scripture, and not from public opinion. When a church is not assembling, it is not truly a church. The Bible also describes the church as the household of God. That is why both state government and federal government have enacted legislation to protect our right to assemble and to minister to the spiritual needs of our communities.

The church’s right to assemble should not be impeded during a health crisis. When people are isolated and afraid due to troubling circumstances, they need interaction with other believers. In November, Gallup did a survey, asking Americans about their mental health. In 2020, the number of those at least positive about their mental health dropped nine percentage points from 2019, the lowest number since the survey began in 2001. The survey discovered that the percentage of those claiming excellent mental health who attended church weekly in 2020 grew from the year before. The percentage of those who rarely or never attended church experienced a significant drop of 13% during this past year. They need pastoral counseling. More than that, people need spiritual guidance from preaching, teaching, and Bible study. Under what kind of crisis would we consider closing hospitals? People are more than physical bodies. In a spiritual crisis, more than ever we need spiritual treatment.

It goes without saying that a public health crisis produces physical needs that demand attention. But it is undeniable that this crisis has also produced spiritual, emotional, and relational needs in individuals and in homes. Drug abuse, domestic violence, and homicides are rising right now because the spiritual and emotional needs of people are not being met. I know by experience that this is true. In 2020, Milwaukee recorded nearly double the amount of homicides from the previous year and aggravated assault was up 25%. Drug abuse and alcohol abuse continued to rise. The United Health Foundation gives 23.6% as the percentage of adults in our state who reported binge drinking or chronic drinking. We are labeled as the “least healthy state” with only the District of Columbia having a higher percentage. Many in our community are searching right now for a church home. We are almost overwhelmed with the need to minister in our church to those who are seeking help right now. The need for church ministry is essential to our society, not optional.

Executive Staff:

Wayne Van Gelderen
Senior Pastor

Mark Gillmore
Missions/Multiplication

Stephen Van Gelderen
Discipleship/Administration

Micah Shoultz
Outreach/Development

Stephen Zempel
Training/College Administration



**CALVARY
BAPTIST CHURCH**

Public Hearing on Senate Bill 7

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 Senate Bill 7.

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 12 days 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.

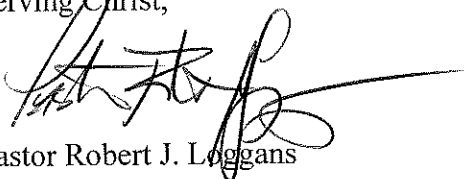
Our counseling of members of the community has increased. I received a frantic phone call just yesterday from a woman who is overwhelmed with all of the challenges of the pandemic. We talked. She just needed someone to talk to and pray for her and encourage her from the Scriptures as to how to cope with 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 Senate Bill #7 to guarantee that churches and houses of worship stay open to minister effectively to our hurting society.

Serving Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pastor Robert J. Loggans', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Pastor Robert J. Loggans



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Senator André Jacque, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Human Services, Children and Families

FROM: Kim Vercauteren, Executive Director, Wisconsin Catholic Conference 

DATE: January 21, 2021

RE: Support for Senate Bill 7, 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 Senate Bill 7, 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.

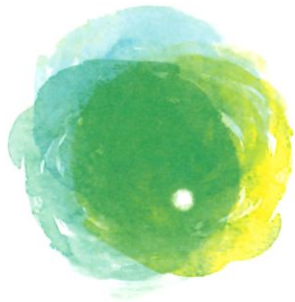
As Catholics, we are obligated to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that “Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice.” (CCC no. 2181) In the early months of the pandemic, serious health concerns, coupled with limited knowledge regarding the coronavirus’s 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. Indeed, 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. The Mass is more than a religious obligation. 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 Senate Bill 7 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.



ProLife
LOVE. FOR LIFE. WI.

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 7: prohibiting local health officers from closing or forbidding gatherings in places of worship to control outbreaks and epidemics of the 2019 novel coronavirus

**Senate Committee on Human Services, Children and Families
By Matt Sande, Director of Legislation**

January 21, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Jacque 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 Senate Bill (SB) 7, 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. Senate Bill 7 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.



Oral Testimony for Tara Czachor of Wisconsin United For Freedom

Thursday, January 21, 2021: Senate Committee on Human Services, Children, and Families

Good afternoon! I just wanted to thank this committee, especially my own Senator André Jacque, for having a public hearing on these very important bills. On behalf of my family and the organization Wisconsin United For Freedom, of which I represent, and on behalf of thousands of Wisconsinites, I sincerely thank you.

Wisconsin United For Freedom is in strong support of **SB4, which would Prohibit Public Health Officers & DHS from mandating Covid-19 Vaccination**. It is very apparent to us, that Chapter 252 of Wisconsin's State Statutes are far too vague, and gives far too much power and control to unelected bureaucrats, of whom have no accountability in our state. Vague interpretation of the law is a huge issue.

It is also incredibly apparent from the multiple accounts from across this country, how truly dangerous vaccinations can be for some individuals, and how we must never rush the process of approving medical procedures that will be widely used by millions of individuals across our nation. History has taught us this very lesson with regards to the Swine Flu Vaccination catastrophe in 1976, of which it was found that there was an increased risk of Guillian-Barre syndrome (GBS) after vaccine administration.¹

Not FDA Approved

Our organization also firmly supports SB5, Prohibiting Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination for Employment.

Wisconsin citizens should never be forced into a medical procedure that carries very real risks, in order to maintain their employment and feed their families. Vaccinations, like any medical procedure, carry risks, and not only are the Covid-19 vaccinations only approved for Emergency Use, **currently, they are not FDA approved vaccines.**²

Public vaccine policies, that include mandates, constitute an assault on the rights of individuals to receive full and informed consent. Informed consent includes the right to decide what goes into our own bodies, and the right as a parent to choose what is injected into our children's bodies

I have provided you with a copy of the Fact Sheet given to Healthcare Providers administering the Pfizer Covid-19 Vaccine for your review. I have highlighted the section at the bottom of page 7, which states that those receiving the vaccine must receive additional information, including, 1) that the Pfizer vaccine is not FDA approved, 2) that the recipient or their caregiver has the option to accept or refuse the vaccine, 3) the significant known and potential risks and benefits of the vaccine, 4) Information about available alternative vaccines and the risks and

benefits of those alternatives.

This issue of mandatory vaccination for employment is incredibly pertinent, considering the recent Milwaukee Journal Sentinel report of Rock Haven, a Rock County-owned Janesville nursing home, laying off their staff for refusing the Covid-19 vaccine. The article states that a memo to employees informed them that the covid-19 vaccine was “a requirement for all staff” and that employees who failed to get the vaccine would be laid off. They also stated that a laid off employee would not be eligible to return to work until they received 2 doses of the vaccine.

According to the article,

Michelle Lynch, a secretary at Rock Haven, said employees should not be forced to get the vaccine.

"We have staff that are having side-effects from it, and they're being told, 'Too bad,' " she said.

In letters to Rock County supervisors, two employees said they suffered high fevers and other side-effects from getting the vaccine on Jan. 5, the first day the nursing home conducted vaccinations. One of them wrote that the side-effects were so bad she had to go to the doctor and was advised not to get the second shot of the vaccine.”³

Prior Felony and Criminal Negligence

Aside from the issue of informed consent and bodily autonomy, individuals may also have other rational and valid arguments for rejecting this new emergency use Covid-19 vaccination. Some individuals, may look at Pfizers track record for example, and decide that in their opinion, they are not a trustworthy company, and they do not wish to receive the products they are offering, or they may not wish to receive the first market product from Moderna. ⁴

For example, according to the Department of Justice in 2009, ⁵

“Pfizer Inc. and its subsidiary Pharmacia & Upjohn Company Inc. (hereinafter together "Pfizer") have agreed to pay \$2.3 billion, the largest health care fraud settlement in the history of the Department of Justice, to resolve criminal and civil liability arising from the illegal promotion of certain pharmaceutical products.”

I could go on and on in detail about the wrong doings Pfizer admitted to, but the point of this is that Pfizer has been caught red handed before, and will be caught again. If this same situation were to happen with the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer, there would be no lawsuits, no court proceedings, no discovery phases, because the Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers are exempt from liability. A federal law establishes that the only option for compensation for COVID-19 vaccine victims is the Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program (CICP).⁶ Only eight percent of all petitioners since 2010 have been awarded compensation through the CICP. No legal or medical expert fees are covered, no pain and suffering is awarded, lost wages are capped at \$50,000, and there is no judicial appeal. Vaccination must be voluntary.

Safety Concerns

With mass vaccination of the Covid-19 vaccines starting a few weeks ago, there have been multiple safety issues that have come to light within the first few weeks. Within our own state of Wisconsin, according to MedAlerts, an interface built from the governments raw data from the VAERS search engine, CDC Wonder, there have been 89-vaccine injury reports since Covid-19 vaccinations in Wisconsin have been administered, including 2 deaths.⁷ While a report to VAERS does not mean that the vaccine was responsible for the death, it also does not rule out an association. If Public Health officials seem to report on every Covid-19 death, one has to ask oneself why they are not reporting on deaths following vaccine administration.

One specific vaccine injury in Wisconsin stood out to me, of a 22-year-old male who received the vaccine on December 17, and just four days later, he was admitted to the hospital. The write up for his vaccine injury report states: *“Patient received Pfizer COVID 19 vaccine last Thursday 12/17. Admitted today (12/21) with bleeding and low platelet count - working up for ITP (a disorder that can lead to easy or excessive bruising and bleeding⁸) and TTP (which is another blood disorder⁹). Given recency of vaccination and no known contributory allergy or medical history, physician thought potentially associated with vaccination.”¹⁰*

It is entirely possible that serious reactions occurring after Covid-19 vaccine administration are significantly higher given that historically, vaccine reactions are rarely reported. A 2011 report by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) stated **that fewer than one percent of all vaccine adverse events are reported to the government.** This report states the following -

“Although 25% of ambulatory patients experience an adverse drug event, less than 0.3% of all adverse drug events and 1-13% of serious events are reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Likewise, fewer than 1% of vaccine adverse events are reported. Low reporting rates preclude or slow the identification of “problem” drugs and vaccines that endanger public health. New surveillance methods for drug and vaccine adverse effects are needed.”¹¹

Given that both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccinations have just been released, it is entirely possible that the risks associated with these particular vaccines might outweigh the benefit. These vaccines *must not be mandated.* Health care providers and public health officials *must* ensure that the public is aware of the risks of this vaccine, provide informed consent, and allow individuals the right to decide to choose which medical procedures are right for them, if any.

It is not right of the state to use its power to compel or mandate the use of liability free pharmaceutical products. Medical procedures, that carry very real risks, should always be voluntary, and citizens in our state should not face the threat of losing their financial security over making an informed medical decision. Our organization supports individual choices, and if someone feels that receiving the Covid-19 vaccine is in their best interest, we fully support, and even advocate, for their right to do so, however, **we take a firm and unwavering stance against mandatory vaccinations.**

I also wanted to mention our support for **SB7, which would prohibit local health officers from closing or forbidding gatherings in places of worship to control outbreaks and epidemics of the 2019 novel coronavirus.** Our organization stands for constitutional freedoms, and the right to worship is certainly included.

Thank you very much, for your time, for your service to this great state, and for preserving the freedoms our founding fathers have bestowed upon us. As a mother of 4, as a wife, and speaking on behalf of over 10,000 Wisconsinites who are a part of our organization, I very strongly encourage you all to vote yes on these bills. I also encourage you all to work together with the Wisconsin Assembly to pass good legislation, even if that means adding these same standalone provisions back into the Assembly Bill 1 and placing it onto the Governor's desk. Thank you!

References

¹ Schonberger LB, Bregman DJ, Sullivan-Bolyai JZ, Keenlyside RA, Ziegler DW, Retailiau HF, Eddins DL, Bryan JA. Guillain-Barre syndrome following vaccination in the National Influenza Immunization Program, United States, 1976--1977. *Am J Epidemiol.* 1979 Aug;110(2):105-23. doi: 10.1093/oxfordjournals.aje.a112795. PMID: 463869.

² <https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2020-12-12/why-fda-didnt-approve-pfizer-covid-19-vaccine-eua>

³ [Wisconsin nursing home staff laid off for refusing COVID-19 vaccine](#)

⁴ [Moderna nears its first-ever FDA authorization, for its COVID-19 vaccine](#)

⁵ [JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES LARGEST HEALTH CARE FRAUD SETTLEMENT IN ITS HISTORY \(Sept. 2, 2009\)](#)

⁶ [Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program \(CICP\)](#)

⁷ [Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System \(VAERS\) accessed with Medalerts - Vaccine Reactions Reported to VAERS from December 2020-January 7, 2021 \(Accessed 1/20/21\)](#)

⁸ [Definition of Thrombocytopenic purpura - ITP](#)

⁹ [Definition of Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura - TTP](#)

¹⁰ [Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System \(VAERS\) accessed with Medalerts – VAERS ID Number 905345 \(Accessed 1/20/21\)](#)

¹¹ [AHRQ Electronic Support for Public Health–Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(ESP:VAERS\) Dec 1, 2007-Sep. 30, 2010](#)

DAYSRING

BAPTIST CHURCH AND SCHOOLS



Thursday, January 21, 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 4,5,6, & 7.

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 see our campus on the south side of I-94 as you enter into Waukesha.

I'm sure you understand why SB7 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: "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.

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."*

Dear Senator Jacques, Senator Ballweg and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, Children and Families.

My name is Andrew Bengston. I am a resident of Pardeeville Wisconsin and a constituent of Senator Ballweg.

I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bills 4, 5 and 7. I support Senate bills 4 and 5 because it allows people to make their own educated decisions.

COVID 19 is primarily serious and potentially deadly virus to a known group of people: the older generation and people with preexisting health conditions.

Safety Data is very limited on this vaccine and we do not know the long-term consequences that messenger RNA vaccines will have on our health and whether they will alter our DNA. It should be your choice to get this Vaccine (and any Vaccine for that matter) No one should be forced to get any pharmaceutical product as a condition of employment or living in this country. If the government has power to mandate Vaccines, then it can have power to do many other bad things to the people. This bill is a step in the right direction to limit the power of government. Something the founding fathers wanted to begin with.

Whether or not you get this Vaccine is your choice. I'm not stopping anyone from getting it if they want to. But if you don't, you are entitled to that choice as well. Back in March, the Governor ordered the closure of businesses and since then, we have seen counties put significant restrictions on the number of people who can be in a place at one time, with fines imposed on those who violate. If this can be done, then there's no reason why the government can't protect employees from being forced to receive these liability-free vaccines.

Totalitarian governments give you no choice – not governments of a constitutional republic who have taken an oath to uphold the Constitution. Too much government control and laws lead to censorship of information and even to the discrimination and even hunting down of people who disagree. The founding fathers wanted the people to be afforded as much freedom as possible. This must include the choice of not having to get a vaccine that could cause them harm. I know first hand about vaccine injury because I was seriously harmed by vaccines as a child and continue to have issues because of this harm.

Senate Bill 7 protects freedom of religion in the first amendment of the US constitution. This makes sure people of religion can worship however they would like. Totalitarian governments are the ones who fine and arrest people for practicing their religious beliefs in a manner of their choosing. We can't allow this to happen in our state. It is your choice to go to a church in this pandemic. If you don't want to, that's completely fine. But freedom of religion is a basic right and shouldn't be violated.

Thank you for your time.

Andrew Bengston

Pardeeville, Wisconsin

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before this committee on some Senate Bills 4, 5, 6, and 7.

I Strongly urge you to approve and pass each of these bills through the Legislature. Our liberties have been encroached upon more than any other time in our nations history as they have been in these last ten months. We have seen churches unconstitutionally ordered to shutter their doors, families and groups of people told they cannot gather together, people and businesses forced to require mask compliance with respect to personal liberties, the government intrusion into people's lives, and many more specifics could be mentioned. Although these bills are not perfect, they are a start on many pieces of legislation that must be passed and signed by Governor Evers to stop and limit the encroachment of government upon our personal liberties given to us by God and spelled out in the Constitution. Far too long the legislature has sat idly by while people have faced personal liberties taken away, lockdowns and school closure have had drastic consequences on mental and physical health, and the very essence of what America is being trampled under foot.

If these bills are not passed, they will have many possible consequences that will further erode away our personal liberties, and unnecessarily put the people under pressure to make decisions that they do not want to make.

We must prohibit government officials from mandating vaccination at all levels of government, We must prohibit mandatory vaccination for employment, We must open up our schools as so many students are suffering horribly, and we must, I repeat, must forbid any future closures of places of worship and education by the government. Please remember what our state Constitution says, "The right of every person to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of conscience shall never be infringed; nor shall any person be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry, without consent; nor shall any control of, or interference with, the rights of conscience be permitted, or any preference be given by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship; nor shall any money be drawn from the treasury for the benefit of religious societies, or religious or theological seminaries."

In conclusion, I would like to mention that these bills should have been combined with the COVID bill instead of as stand along bills.

Thank you for listening to my thoughts and concerns regarding these bills.

Micah Roberts

Mukwonago, WI

Dear members of the Committee on Human Services, Children and families.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege to address you this afternoon.

My name is Jonathan Hesketh, I am a resident of Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin.

I come before you to voice my strong support for the proposed legislation contained in Senate bill 4, Senate Bill 5 and Senate bill 7. The freedom to gather, worship, and to choose what type of health care or medical treatment I need is sacred and should be protected at all costs. I strongly support and applaud the Senators who have drafted and who are sponsoring this Legislation. It is Legislation that affirms my constitutional right to assembly, freedom of conscience, and freedom to make decisions for the health and well-being of my family without government mandates, or excessive authority given to un-elected bureaucrats. I urge this committee to approve these pieces of legislation as written, and in so doing fulfilling your duty to uphold the constitution.

You are serving your constituents at a time of uncertainty for the future. You were elected by the people of Wisconsin to protect our freedoms. Many of us feel that our choices were taken away from us during the past year. Everyone was willing to make sacrifices but we do not want those sacrifices to become permanent or to become involuntary. I, and I alone, am responsible for my health and well-being. I absolutely do not want choices that affect me greatly to be given to individuals who are not answerable to the people. Leave these personal decisions in the hands of those that are affected the most, the citizen. The individual. The mother, the father. The family.

Thank you

1/21/2021

Samantha Kohlstedt <samanthakohlstedt@gmail.com>



Public Hearing Today

Thu, Jan 21, 2021 at 10:26 AM

Samantha Kohlstedt <samanthakohlstedt@gmail.com>
Draft To: Sen. Jacque@legis.wisconsin.gov

Senator Jacque,

This is my testimony regarding the Public Hearing today by the Senate Committee on Human Services, Children and Families:

I am 19 years old and live in Jefferson County. I support the Senate Bills 4, 5 and 7.

Regarding 4 and 5, I believe that decisions concerning vaccines and health care are the rights of every individual. The Government has no right under the Constitution to force vaccines or any other health treatment. The side-effects of the Covid 19 vaccine in particular are very disconcerting, and the long-term consequences cannot be known at this time. I should have the right to research any vaccines and make an informed decision for myself. I also believe that my health history is private, and that I should not be required to present any such information (especially regarding past vaccinations) when applying for a job.

Please pass Senate Bills 4 and 5 to protect my health rights and privacy.

Regarding Bill 7:

I believe that it is unconstitutional to close churches or other houses of worship for any reason. The first amendment clearly states that *no* law may be made 'respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.' The coronavirus is no reason for exception. It is my right to decide whether I am comfortable going to a church or not. Please pass Senate Bill 7 to protect my right to worship freely.

Thank you,
Samantha Kohlstedt

**James & Susan Dziak
320 McGrath Lane
Hartland, WI 53029
262-397-4031**

Chairman Sen Andr e Jacque - 608-266-3512
Vice-Chair Sen Joan Ballweg - 608-266-0751
Sen Eric Wimberger - 608-266-5670
Sen. LaTonya Johnson - 608-266-2500
Sen Melissa Agard - 608-266-9170

My wife and I both contracted COVID in March of 2020 and during this period the medical services refused us any medical assistance and ordered us to stay in our home. These services included our Aurora primary care doctors of over 30 years. We are both in our 70's and the point of being isolated and cut off was deeply concerning to put it mildly.

We and many others absolutely believe the lockdowns were the most devastating to personal well-being and the financial welfare of many especially the hourly worker and hourly.

The continued actions by government officials to lock down schools, churches and social gatherings is without a doubt the most harmful to our society.

The misguided thought that lockdowns will protect us from the virus is absolutely wrong. The Virus will touch everyone at some point and "managing the curve" is nothing more than evil control over the most freedom loving country in the world.

The information flowing even from medical workers includes lying about statistics to continue the control. States with the most stringent controls are reporting the worst results.

Churches are essential to everyone person of faith and those looking for community support. In light of other so called essential enterprises including abortion clinic that take life, casino's etc. it exposes the real intent of government officials.

Free thinking people know what is happening and why it is happening you must make the right decision to declare churches and all places of worship essential.

Thank you,

Jim and Susan Dziak