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REPLY TO FLORIDA

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Sample Religious Exemption Requests For COVID Shot Mandates

Liberty Counsel has received many, many inquiries on the various COVID shot mandates and requests for sample exemption request letters. Faith-based exemption requests (as opposed to health, ingredients, philosophical, or other bases) remain the strongest basis for an individual exemption.

Most mandates are currently coming from employers and educational institutions. In the employment context, Title VII prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of religion. The First Amendment applies to public employers and educational institutions. The current “Emergency Use Authorization” (“EUA”) status of all of the COVID shots means that they cannot be mandated.

Many of our clients and constituents hold sincere pro-life religious beliefs that prohibit them from participating in or benefiting from an abortion. Some believe that they may not benefit in any way from an abortion, no matter how remote in time that abortion occurred. Others have prayed and asked God whether they should get the COVID shot and have received a clear word from the Lord in their spirit that they must not get the shot. Still others do not feel such a leading; but support the individual believer’s “liberty of conscience,” consistent with the principles outlined in 1 Corinthians 8. There are also those who have recovered from COVID due to healthy immune system God has given them, and are themselves protected from getting COVID due to natural immunity, and a reliance upon God’s protection consistent with Psalm 91.

The Johnson & Johnson (Janssen Pharmaceuticals) COVID shot “did require the use of fetal cell cultures, specifically PER.C6, in order to produce and manufacture the vaccine.”¹ Multiple state department of health “FAQs” confirm that while mRNA vaccines by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna do not “contain” fetal cells, but clearly state that “[e]arly in development of mRNA vaccine technology, fetal cells were used for ‘proof of concept’ (to demonstrate how a cell could take up mRNA and produce the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein) or to characterize the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein.”² Thus, both Pfizer and Moderna used abortion-derived cell lines to “to **test the efficacy** of both vaccines.”³ Therefore, claims that Pfizer and Moderna “do not require the use of any fetal cell cultures in order

¹ https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/COVID%20Vaccine%20Page/COVID-19_Vaccine_Fetal_Cell_Handout.pdf

² https://dh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/immunizations/You_Have_Qs_COVID-19_Vaccine_FAQ.pdf

³ https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/COVID%20Vaccine%20Page/COVID-19_Vaccine_Fetal_Cell_Handout.pdf

to manufacture (produce) the vaccine” are in conflict with the statement that “such a cell line was used to test the efficacy of both vaccines.”⁴ “Testing the efficacy” is certainly a part of the research and development process.

In order for an employee or student to prevail under a claim for a religious exemption, whether based on pro-life or other religious beliefs, religious beliefs must be sincerely held, and the requested accommodation must be “reasonable,” and not constitute an undue hardship on the employer or institution.

The manner in which the employer or institution continued its operations in 2020, prior to the availability of the COVID shots, establishes a baseline of treatment of employees or students that is not an “undue hardship.” It will NEVER be an “undue hardship” for the entity to allow the employee or student to continue doing what was considered “safe and effective” or “mitigating” in the absence of the vaccine. However, such treatment may become discriminatory, if novel or additional restrictions or requirements are applied to the person who should otherwise be exempt. If the COVID shots work, those people who have received them are protected, and it is not an undue hardship for individuals who have religious objections to not receive such shots.

A pastor verification letter is beneficial to proving the sincerity of the belief, but is not legally required. It is nonetheless very helpful in substantiating a claim that one’s belief is religious in nature, and that it is sincere. The following samples serve as a guide only. **DO NOT copy and paste them verbatim.** We encourage each individual to prayerfully consider what he or she believes, and why. Each individual should seek God’s will through prayer, of whether he or she should comply with the COVID shot mandate directed toward them, or whether the Holy Spirit is leading, guiding, or moving their spirit to refuse the COVID shot.

If you have a sincere religious conviction against taking a COVID shot, you can put the following applicable sample text in your own words and submit as a religious accommodation request. Otherwise, it may be retained for your future personal use.

SAMPLE EMPLOYEE/STUDENT EXEMPTION LETTER:

I’m writing to request a medical and religious exemption from [COMPANY NAME’s/COLLEGE NAME’s] COVID shot directive. I have prayed about how to respond to the COVID shot directive, in light of my [medical issues], and in light of my pro-life and other religious beliefs. I believe my body belongs to God and is the temple of his Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 6:19-20. I believe that innocent life is sacred to God, from conception, to birth, to natural death. (Jeremiah 1:5). I believe God’s promise that “if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally.” I understand that the manufacturers of the COVID shots have used aborted fetal cell lines as part of their development or testing of vaccines.⁵ My faith prohibits me from participating in or benefiting from an abortion, no matter how remote in time that abortion occurred.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will guide each person who repents of their sin and believes upon Him into all truth. As a believer in Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in me. I have been a Christian for many years. I seek God’s will for my life through prayer,

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/COVID%20Vaccine%20Page/COVID-19_Vaccine_Fetal_Cell_Handout.pdf;
https://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/immunizations/You_Have_Qs_COVID-19_Vaccine_FAQ.pdf;
https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/COVID%20Vaccine%20Page/COVID-19_Vaccine_Fetal_Cell_Handout.pdf.

reading the Bible, and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to help me to do God's will.

It is against my faith and my conscience to commit sin. Sin is anything that violates the will of God, as set forth in the Bible, and as impressed upon the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit. In order to keep myself from sin, and receive God's direction in life, I pray and ask God for wisdom and direction daily. As part of my prayers, I have asked God for direction regarding the current COVID shot requirement. As I have prayed about what I should do, the Holy Spirit has moved on my heart and conscience that I must not accept the COVID shot. If I were to go against the moving of the Holy Spirit, I would be sinning and jeopardizing my relationship with God and violating my conscience.

I'm therefore asking for an exemption from the COVID shot directive so that my conscience can remain clear before God. Thank you for your consideration.

SAMPLE PASTOR VERIFICATION LETTER:

I understand that NAME has submitted a religious exemption request from the COVID vaccine directive. As his pastor, I can speak to the sincerity of his faith and his request. NAME told me that after the directive to accept the COVID vaccine came out, he started searching the Scriptures as to how he should respond, and if he should accept the shot.

NAME is a Christian, and believes the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant, living Word of God. When Jesus Christ went back to heaven after He was resurrected, He promised to send his Holy Spirit, who would guide us into all truth. Our church teaches that each believer in Christ receives the Holy Spirit, who directly leads the individual in his walk with God, as the believers seeks wisdom through prayer and Scripture reading. See the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. Our church teaches that believers should follow their conscience, as informed by the written word of God, and the leading of his Holy Spirit. Our church teaches the Biblical sanctity of human life, and the Biblical interdiction against abortion as the shedding of innocent blood. Many Christians understand this interdiction to include ingesting or benefiting from products derived from or using aborted fetal cell lines.

NAME has told me that based on his review of Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance and position statements, and understanding of the issues, and much prayer that he might discern truth from error, and whether he should get the shot, the Holy Spirit is not allowing him to accept the COVID shot. He believes that if he were to do so, he would be sinning against our living God. Our church supports him as he follows the leading of the Holy Spirit and supports his request for a religious exemption.

Pastor NAME

Again, every person should prayerfully consider what God through the Holy Spirit is leading him or her to do, and should make an individual written request, using these samples as guides.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should the samples be copied and pasted.

Many other people have contacted and are contacting Liberty Counsel. Multiple direct copies of the sample language submitted as one's own statement to the same entity could undermine the perceived sincerity of one's own request, and the requests of others. Assuming that the samples accurately reflect your religious beliefs, you can model your response after them, or change as necessary to reflect your beliefs.

This letter does not create an attorney-client relationship or legal representation by Liberty Counsel. A separate contract will be executed if Liberty Counsel agrees to represent a specific client in a specific suit. We are willing to assist further, outside of litigation, to the extent resources permit. Any legal assistance we are able to provide is at no charge.

For additional questions, or to inquire whether Liberty Counsel can assist further if the employer or institution rejects the request, please contact us at www.lc.org/legal-help, via email at Liberty@lc.org; or via telephone at 407-875-1776.