

## STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HB 248

I am writing both in a professional and personal capacity. In my professional capacity, I serve as a lawyer representing churches, synagogues, denominations, individual clergy, and other religious organizations. The people religious organizations I work with span the theological and political spectrum. Not all agree on vaccines, but all agree on the rights of conscience and right to live one's life in accordance with the dictates of conscience.

HB 248 will respect the religious decisions made by persons in the privacy of their personal lives when they come to work. Absent this type of protection, they will either be forced to either compromise their genuinely held religious beliefs, or compromise their ability to make a living, or risk being singled out by their employers. HB 248 will honor and promote individual decisions made on religious, ethical, and medical bases.

Personally, I have already witnessed potential discrimination arising from vaccine status. I have seen (and reviewed from a legal perspective) corporate vaccine policies which place differing work requirements on individuals based on their vaccination status. Forcing differing work-space requirements, distancing, and singling out non-vaccinated people with different masking policies all create a very coercive and threatening environment. With mask requirements being lifted, forcing those who have personal, medical, ethical or religious reasons for opting not to be vaccinated to be treated differently creates an awkward intrusion which damages the personal relationships at the office. It will lead to one class of persons being viewed differently, treated differently, and potentially scorned or looked down upon, by those who believe their choice is superior. This places an onerous price on a personal decision.

At this point, with Covid on the wane, herd immunity imminent, and treatment improving, the risks are minimal. The costs to intrusions on freedom of personal medical choices is great, personal, and oppressive.

Please protect the dignity of citizens in the workplace by passing HB 248.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Forrest A. Norman