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October 31, 2021

**RE: Religious Exemption, COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate**

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a devout Christian seeking an exemption from [EMPLOYER NAME]'s recent announcement that it is requiring its employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 on or before [INSERT DATE]. Kindly accept this letter explaining in further detail the core, fundamental teachings and beliefs I strongly hold in faith and the basis for why I cannot in morality receive the vaccine without compromising my closely held religious beliefs.

Fundamental to the Christian faith is a teaching that requires Christians to refuse a medical intervention, including a vaccination, if his or her informed conscience comes to this sure judgment. While the Christian faith does not prohibit medical procedures and in fact, generally encourages the use of safe and effective medical intervention as a means to both, safeguard individuals and further mitigate any public health exposures, this is the general rule—it is not absolute.

The following authoritative Church teachings demonstrate the principled religious basis on which a Christian may determine that he or she ought to refuse certain vaccines:

1. Vaccination is not morally obligatory in principle and so must be voluntary.
2. There is a general moral duty to refuse the use of medical products, including certain vaccines, that are produced using human cells lines derived from direct abortions. It is permissible to use such vaccines only under certain case-specific conditions, based on a judgment of conscience.
3. A person's informed judgments about the proportionality of medical interventions are to be respected unless they contradict authoritative Christian moral teachings.
4. A person is morally required to obey his or her sure conscience.
5. Abortion is a sin and contrary to the teachings of the Christian Church. As a result, a Christian may invoke Church teaching to refuse a vaccine developed or produced using abortion-derived cell lines.

More generally, a Christian might refuse a vaccine based on the Church's teachings concerning therapeutic proportionality. Therapeutic proportionality is an assessment of whether the benefits of a medical intervention outweigh the undesirable side-effects and burdens in light of the integral good of the person, including spiritual, psychological, and bodily goods. It can

also extend to the good of others and the common good, which likewise entail spiritual and moral dimensions and are not reducible to public health. The judgment of therapeutic proportionality must be made by the person who is the potential recipient of the intervention in the concrete circumstances, not by public health authorities or by other individuals who might judge differently in their own situations.

Another basis is the fundamental Christian belief that life is sacred. There is no doubt that fetal tissues were integral to the development of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (“vaccine”). In the early development of the vaccine, a fetal cell line was used to test that the active ingredient, messenger RNA, worked as intended. The tests showed that messenger RNA, when introduced into human cells, produces the viral protein that makes us develop immunity against the virus that causes COVID-19. But-for the use of fetal tissue, the vaccine would not exist.

Moreover, there is evidence, as a matter of law, that bioprocurement companies have, in fact, sold fetal tissue in violation of federal law and as a result, I cannot in good moral conscience, risk engaging in a practice that relates to an industry where fetal tissue has been monetized. On July 15, 2015, the United States House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee and House Judiciary Committee opened investigations into illegal fetal tissue procurement practices.<sup>1</sup> On August 14, 2015, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee initiated a third investigation.<sup>2</sup> On October 7, 2015, and as a means to consolidate the three House investigations into one, the House created a Select Investigative Panel within the Energy and Commerce Committee.<sup>3</sup> The Senate Judiciary Committee also initiated its own investigation, which it conducted contemporaneously and independent of the consolidated House investigation.<sup>4</sup>

The two Congressional investigations concluded in December 2016<sup>5</sup> after both, the House and Senate independently concluded that many actors within the abortion industry had committed systemic violations of the law.<sup>6</sup> Due to these findings, the House Select Investigative Panel and Senate Judiciary Committee issued numerous criminal and regulatory referrals to federal, state, and local law enforcement entities, including for several abortion providers and fetal tissue procurement companies.

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1 Press Release, House Energy and Commerce Committee, Energy and Commerce Committee Launches Investigation Following “Abhorrent” Planned Parenthood Video (Jul. 15, 2015); Press Release, House Judiciary Committee, Chairman Goodlatte Announces House judiciary Committee Investigation into Horrific Abortion Practices (Jul. 15, 2015).

2 Letter from Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *et al.*, to Cecile Richards, President, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc. (Aug. 14, 2015).

3 Wesley Lowery & Mike DeBonis, *Boehner: There will be no government shutdown; select committee will probe Planned Parenthood*, WASHINGTON POST (Sep. 27, 2015), <https://wapo.st/2QxxdDR>.

4 *Id.*

5 *Id.*

6 Select Investigative Panel of the Energy & Commerce Committee, FINAL REPORT (Dec. 30, 2016); Majority Staff Of S. Comm. On The Judiciary, 114TH CONG., Human Fetal Tissue Research: Context And Controversy, S. DOC. No. 114-27 (2d Sess. 2016).

In December 2016, the Texas Health and Human Services Division (“Texas HHS”) issued a Final Notice of Termination to Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast (“PP-Gulf Coast”) based in Houston that terminated its enrollment in the Texas Medicaid program. According to Texas HHS, the termination was based on two factors: (1) footage of CMP’s visit to the PP-Gulf Coast clinic revealing that PP-Houston would modify procedures in order to sell tissue; and (2) the U.S. House investigation’s conclusion that PP-Houston had repeatedly lied to it.<sup>7</sup>

In October 2016, the Orange County, California, District Attorney initiated a civil prosecution against DV Biologics and DaVinci Biosciences for illegally re-selling fetal tissue the companies obtained from Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties (“PP-Orange”).<sup>8</sup> The successful prosecution resulted in a stipulated judgment in which both companies admitted to selling fetal body parts obtained from PP-Orange for profit. The parties also agreed to pay \$7.8 million for violating state and federal laws.<sup>9</sup>

In January 2017, the Attorney General of Arizona initiated a civil prosecution against abortion provider, Jackrabbit Family Medicine, P.C. (“Camelback Family Planning”) for illegally transferring fetal tissue to StemExpress, LLC, a California-based bioprocurement company.<sup>10</sup> The prosecution was successful, and the Arizona Attorney General determined that the consent forms used by StemExpress were deficient because:

The consent forms did not state certain facts regarding StemExpress’s business. . . . The consent forms [] did not state that, under the agreement [Camelback Family Planning] had entered into with StemExpress in addition to supplying the collection tubes and paying the costs of shipping the samples to StemExpress, StemExpress would pay [Camelback Family Planning] set amounts from \$75–250 for each blood and tissue sample provided.<sup>11</sup>

As part of the settlement, Camelback Family Planning was required to return all payments received it received from StemExpress and agree it would refrain from selling fetal tissue in the future.<sup>12</sup> Camelback Family Planning ultimately returned the money it received from StemExpress in exchange for *inter alia* fetal tissues.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from Stuart W. Bowen, Jr., Inspector General, Texas Health & Human Services Commission, to Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, et al. (Dec. 20, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> See Complaint, *The People of the State of California v. DV Biologics, LLC*, Orange Cnty. No. 30-2016-00880665-CU-BT-CJC (Cal. Super., Oct. 11, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> See Judgment, *The People of the State of California v. DV Biologics, LLC*, Orange Cnty. No. 30-2016-00880665-CU-BT-CJC (Cal. Super., Dec. 19, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> See Complaint, *State of Arizona v. Jackrabbit Family Medicine, P.C.*, Maricopa Cnty. No. CV2017-000863 (Ariz. Super., Jan. 19, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> See Assurance of Discontinuance, *State of Arizona v. Jackrabbit Family Medicine, P.C.*, Maricopa Cnty. No. CV2017-000863 (Ariz. Super., Jan. 19, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

In short, fetal tissue has a long history of being procured and sold and it is not subject to dispute that HEK-293 and PEK.C6 fetal cell lines were used in the development and testing of the COVID-19 vaccines. Fetal tissue and bioprocurement, as evidenced above, flourish (lawfully or in the instances articulated herein, unlawfully) and continue to be sold and used in the development of vaccines. Because of this and as a Christian, I cannot engage, support, or morally receive the vaccine in good conscience.

At the core of the Church's teaching are the first and last points listed above: vaccination is not a universal obligation, and a person must obey the judgment of his or her own informed and certain conscience. In fact, the Christian Church instructs that following one's conscience is following Christ Himself:

In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law: "Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; . . . [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ."

Therefore, if a Christian comes to an informed and sure judgment in conscience that he or she should not receive a vaccine, then the Christian faith requires that the person follow this certain judgment of conscience and refuse the vaccine. The Church is clear: "Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. 'He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters'."

I appreciate your understanding and trust that this letter suffices in satisfying any inquiry you may have as to my faith. While a verbal advisory is sufficient as a matter of law, I wanted to extend a thoughtful and articulate letter as a courtesy to help with any administrative hurdles you may encounter.

Yours in Christ,

[First, Last]