

I am testifying as an advocate for a small group among the unvaccinated. These are the ones that I believe should be allowed a religious exemption.

I want to talk to you about my personal experience with God over medical science. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer and sent to a surgeon for a radical surgical procedure. Of course, as a believer in Jesus Christ, my wife and I, as well as other friends of ours, had already begun praying for my healing. We also began taking communion daily and meditating on the scriptures that pertain to physical healing.

Being caught up in the dire prognosis, I did originally succumb to agreeing to chemo therapy - at first - but as God worked on my heart, and my body began to manifest some very bad reactions to the chemo, I felt peace about stopping the chemo, turning down the operation, and walking away from the recommended radiation treatments.

A year later the doctors realized that I had dropped off the radar and insisted on seeing me. Once again the prognosis was that I still needed the radical surgery to prevent the cancer from spreading further in my body. To make a long story short - a month later to the relief and astonishment of the doctors, I was declared cancer free.

If I had not followed my faith in Jesus as my healer and gone with the science and the doctors, today I would have even more damage to my body through unnecessary chemo and radiation and would now be wearing a urostomy pouch 24/7 for the rest of my life.

I strongly urge you to include religious exemptions if you proceed with this bill. At least reconsider regular testing as an option for those that opt not to receive the vaccine.

Aside from my religious beliefs, there are some practical reasons that I would question the necessity of the entire exercise. Many questions cross my mind as I see tens of thousands of maskless people crammed into stadiums across the country every weekend for football games. I see the same behavior at local restaurants, sporting events, BBQs, and parties in my own neighborhood. I also read that in our county we have over 99.1 % of people over the age of 12 vaccinated and I do wonder about the urgency of initiating a draconian vaccine mandate for the few county employees that remain unvaccinated.

Finally, as a county employee, I have been coming to work through this entire last 18 months to help keep things running while so many of my fellow employees remained safe at home. It is disturbing and disappointing that those that have stayed at home for this entire time while I faithfully reported to work, are now ready to terminate my employment if I do not take the shot.

Thank you for your time. I hope you will reconsider this bill or at least amend it to include religious exemptions and testing options in lieu of termination.

Mark Matarese

