

MEMORANDUM FOR MICHIGAN SENATE

SUBJECT: Personal Testimony regarding The Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate

1. The intent of this memorandum is to share my personal testimony regarding The Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate in The Michigan Air National Guard. I am sending this statement in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the DoD or the MIANG. I am also submitting this under protection of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.

2. I am currently an NCO assigned in the Michigan ANG. I began my career in as Regular Air Force and transitioned into the Michigan Air National Guard stationed at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan. I am an AGR. I have served under countless units and commanders. I have relocated, trained, and took on every challenge I was met with to continue to serve the best interests of The United States Air Force. I have dedicated my life to my career of serving my country. This has been more than just a job to me, it has been me and my family's lifestyle. I have sacrificed so much to answer my nations call and I am very proud to be an airman.

In March, I was instructed to telework from home indefinitely due to a worldwide "Covid-19 Pandemic" that caused severe sickness and death to millions around the world. This "Pandemic" caused panic in my residential community as well as the base community. The state of Michigan experienced several lock downs and restrictions. Supply shortages, the lack of information available and the general unknown of what was to come made it a very uneasy time for everyone around me. At that time, I had a young daughter and 8 month twins at home with me while trying to productively telework from home. My husband is a first responder, and we were all terrified that even with me and our children staying at home that he might bring home this deadly virus. My family's mental health was negatively impacted because of the stress inflicted by the actions of my local, state, and federal government's decisions regarding Covid-19.

As time went on, my command started requesting that members return to in person duty around August. With members returning, everyone was instructed to always wear their masks, frequently wash their hands and use hand sanitizer, keep at least a 6 ft distance for "social distancing" and record your temperature every time you entered a building. I had purchased several conservative cloth masks that had changeable filters. At some point, my leadership told me that my masks weren't authorized and issued me a mask that had been sewn together by an airman on base that was producing masks for anyone on base that would like one. I felt angry and confused because my masks fit my face correctly, met the generalized standard that was put out that masks needed to be a cloth mask that covers your nose and mouth and were conservative patterns. It was an instant red flag that my leadership cared

more about the cosmetics of my mask than the actual health, safety, and purpose of my mask. I began doing research on the effects of mask wearing. I was alarmed at what I was learning. Not only are masks uncomfortable to wear but they cause health concerns such as skin issues and unhealthy levels of carbon dioxide being consistently breathed in all day long. It was also infuriating to learn that masks do not protect you from contracting or spreading Covid-19, which was the very reason that was given to us to wear them in the first place.

Towards the end of 2020, it was announced that a "Covid-19 Vaccine" was available and was advertised to be the solution that everyone was hoping for. I knew right from the get-go that I was not going to take this experimental drug. It was not FDA approved and it was established early on that it does not prevent you from contracting or spreading Covid-19. The animosity between military members and even family members began after this vaccine announcement. Everyone had their own opinion on what they believed to be right for themselves. Some believed that you must get the vaccine or you're being selfish to other people by being able to spread the virus while others felt it pointless to take a shot (I say shot because by definition the "Covid-19 Vaccine" is not a vaccine) that doesn't prevent the spread and then you had some people that regardless of the vaccine felt everyone should have the choice to choose for themselves based off their own beliefs and medical history. This divide has only grown throughout time and has caused a severe breakdown of unit cohesion, moral and trust. Not to mention how many personal relationships have dissolved over this political topic.

I have personally had to quarantine several times due to a known Covid-19 exposure or someone in my workplace or household showing potential symptoms. I have received countless PCR tests to prove I was negative so that I could return to work. In the beginning of 2021, military members started getting strongly encouraged to receive the "Covid-19 Vaccine". Towards the middle of the year, the DoD put out that if you were vaccinated, you no longer had to wear a mask indoors. In turn what this did was identify who was vaccinated and who wasn't. It is an understatement to say the tension was high in my workplace with some members wearing a mask and some not. I felt judged and discriminated against that my coworkers were not mandated to wear a mask, but I was, over a vaccine that was not mandated and did not provide any protection. I felt like I was being punished for making decisions on my own health. Approximately 2 weeks later, the DoD announced that everyone regardless of vaccination status had to wear a mask again. I could hear comments being made from both sides about their opinions on DoD decisions and the lack of sense that anything made. I felt like everyone was losing trust and patience with the way the military was handling this "Pandemic".

In August, my leadership began informing my office that we should expect to see a Covid-19 Vaccine mandate coming down and to prepare ourselves. I was told we should get the vaccine if we want to continue to serve. There was no mention of religious accommodations or medical exemptions available. In September, my leadership announced that they will be sitting down with every unvaccinated member and informing them of the 02 December 2021 deadline that Guard members had to get the vaccine or administrative action could be taken against them.

On 08 September an Enlisted Leader coerced 2 of the airmen in my office who were on the fence about getting the vaccine to get vaccinated so that they could be given the opportunity to go TDY. Both went and got vaccinated so they could go on this TDY. I have seen first-hand the coercion, threats, enticements and begging that command has done to get military members to take the Covid-19 Vaccine. I have spoken with many military members, the Area Defense Counsel, Chaplains, and my pastor about my experiences. I tried to receive letters from my primary care physician, gynecologist, and Fertility physician to support my decision to not receive the Covid-19 Vaccine but not one would support my decision. They all gave me their professional and personal opinion about the vaccine and ultimately said that they could not support me because of their organization's stance on the vaccine. I lost faith and trust in medical providers on the civilian side and through the military.

In September I had my meeting with my leadership. I was informed of the deadline and the potential actions that could be taken if I do not meet these medical requirements. I was professional and transparent through every step of this process. I told my command I would not be getting the vaccine for religious, medical, and political reasons. They said they understood but would continue to encourage me to get vaccinated because I was a very valuable member of our team, and they didn't want to lose me to a discharge.

On 11 September during our Regularly Scheduled Drill, there was a peaceful and lawful protest outside the gates of Selfridge ANGB, MI to show support against the Covid-19 Vaccine being mandated to all service members. After being notified of this protest, my leadership explained to our office why it is inappropriate for any of us to take part in these types of activities and how we should be very careful what we say and do due to our military affiliation. I felt like my civil rights were violated by being told that I may not participate in peaceful and lawful protests because I am in the military. During October's Regularly Scheduled Drill, I was instructed to sign a memorandum that stated my intentions going forward for receiving the Covid-19 Vaccine. I stated that I was not going to comply with the mandate and that it was my intention to separate at my ETS.

In November my leadership informed my office that starting on 23 November it is mandated that all full-time employees on base who were not vaccinated will receive a PCR test at the beginning of each duty week. My leadership notified me that my medical processing would not be a sufficient exemption from the Covid-19 vaccine and that I would need to submit some form of accommodation or exemption to remain in the AGR program or my curtail my tour would be curtailed. I have submitted that religious accommodation after many tears of anger and panic. Submitting the accommodation was a struggle due to a lack of guidance with the impending deadline. I have had to jump through many ridiculous hoops to even get the opportunity to extend my contract for the sake of having my medical disabilities evaluated mostly due to the unlawful orders of the federal government.

It wasn't enough that I dedicated the last almost a decade and a half of my life to the United States military. It wasn't enough that I risked life and limb to preserve my homelands freedoms. It wasn't enough that I swore an oath to my country and its constitution. It wasn't enough that I showed up for duty every single day dedicated to my mission and worked hard for my team. I am mourning the loss of the career that I will never see come to fruition through a 20-year retirement. I am sickened that my value and my worth is defined by whether I agree to be an experiment. I am disgusted that my leadership will not stand up for what is morally, ethically, and lawfully right. I can't even begin to describe my feelings towards an organization that I served honorably only to be met with dishonor and betrayal.

Dear Senator Barrett:

I am sending this statement in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the DoD or the MIANG. I am also submitting this under protection of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.

I am a junior enlisted member in the Michigan Air National Guard serving at the Battle Creek Air National Guard base, and I am requiring your assistance. On 24 August 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin declared that all members of the Department of Defense would be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Myself, and several others have submitted our Religious Accommodation Requests (RAR) for the COVID-19 injection. Currently I am waiting to hear if my request has been approved or denied.

This process, starting with Secretary Austin's memorandum on 24 August 2021, has been replete with deception, misinformation, coercion, intimidation, abuse of authority, disregard for the Constitution of the United States and has created open hostility towards service member's strongly held beliefs. I have been effectively and safely performing the duties expected of me since the beginning of the pandemic, and I have remained healthy throughout the entire thing.

Last year I volunteered to be apart of the state's Joint Task Force to counter the spread of COVID-19 in the state of Michigan. My team conducted multiple testing facilities and provided medical support to field hospitals at the TCF Center and the Suburban Collection Showplace, numerous Michigan Department of Corrections locations, multiple Long-Term Care facilities and at several pop-up testing sites. We provided care for over 19,500 patients in 60 days and not one person on my team contracted Covid-19. We were knowingly providing testing for those who were Covid positive, and for those who had no idea.

This mission was considered a "deployment" but since the mission ended and months have passed, I have been told that because I am not fully vaccinated I am considered "unfit to fight" and I am no longer able to deploy, which is a concern for the Wing. I have dedicated almost a decade of my life to the United States Air Force, the Michigan Air National Guard, and the United States of America and now I am being forced to either be injected with an experimental drug or face losing my hard-earned service. To be quite honest and blunt, I think this is absolutely unacceptable. We answer the call when needed, we leave our families when needed, we lose out on birthdays, holidays, and funerals, when needed. But when we need somebody, we get left behind. We are the guinea pigs, and we are being treated like we are easily disposable.

I am fighting this mandate for myself, my family, and for my brother and sister in arms. We are nearing the end of the process outlined by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and government instructions. Many of us have no hope that the aforementioned abuses will abate and our rights will be respected without outside intervention. Irreparable damage to service member's health, careers and means to support their families will be affected unless intervening actions are taken.

I absolutely love serving the Michigan Air National Guard and the United States Air Force. I serve with pride and respect for the world's strongest fighting force. I have been a major advocate when it comes to recruiting others to join, but over the last several months I have strayed away from that, because many of us seeking accommodations feel unheard and unsupported.

On 30 November 2021, Secretary Austin released a new signed memo stating "no Department of Defense funding may be allocated for payment of duties performed under Title-32 for members of the National Guard who do not comply with Department of Defense COVID-19 vaccination requirements." Then it is followed with, "no credit or excused absence shall be afforded to members who do not participate in drills, training, or other duty due to failure to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19." I am absolutely disgusted and ashamed to be treated this way, especially after how much I have sacrificed over the last decade.

I am requesting that you, and the Michigan Senate immediately utilize the full authority of your office to put an end to this COVID-19 vaccination implementation process, and defend and protect the rights we fight so hard for.

Thank you for your time and considering my request.

Dear Senator Barrett,

I am sending this statement in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the DoD or the Michigan Guard. I am also submitting this under protection of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.

I am proud Michigan Guard member. I am enlisted and have been in for over 15 years. I am submitting this statement anonymously because I am concerned I will be punished for telling the truth about this awful vaccine mandate based on how they are treating me for being unvaccinated. In fact, I am already being punished for having filed a religious exemption which is my Constitutionally protected right. And I must say the way my base has handled this entire vaccine mandate can only be described as cruel and insensitive and they treated me and many others as less than human.

Before the mandate came out back in October, 2/3 of my unit was not vaccinated. Then my Commander made us all stand in formation and he announced that if we do not get vaccinated we cannot go on an upcoming deployment. I know that many of them did not want to get it. But every week since then I heard of 5-10 people going and getting the shot. One guy was sick for three weeks straight with a cough and a headache and he still had to work around us giving a few of us a cough. Another lady got so sick that she was throwing up and almost passed out at the doctors office after she got the shot and that the doctor said she should not get the booster shot. But now that she got the first one they're still saying that she needs to get the booster shot in order to deploy. I had another guy who looked so ghostly white I thought he was going to pass out on us and he was completely out of it and zombified. They still made everybody come in to work in spite of their vaccine injuries and it wasn't until two months later that they decided to finally give people two days off after they get the shot because so many people are getting sick from it. And for some reason nobody finds it ironic that if they had just gotten COVID instead of the vaccine then they hardly would have been sick considering how young and healthy all my co-workers are!

We are now down to a small handful of people in my unit out of closer to 40 people at the start of this that were not vaccinated because of all the extreme pressure. Those of us that are still left are constantly being asked if we were putting in an exemption or what we're doing or where we're at in the process never showing an ounce of sympathy for our religious beliefs but rather a strong disdain for anything religious. What has our military turned into? They said if we have not started the exemption paperwork as of December 2, we will be facing reprimand paperwork to remove us from the military which is a terrible threat to make to those of us that support our families with our military job especially with Christmas coming up. However, my unit offered almost no assistance to help me get the process done by December 2. In fact, I had been working on trying to get a religious waiver to the vaccine mandate for several months now and I had to set up all the appointments myself and do all the research for what I needed to do to seek an exemption from the "vaccine". Nobody in my unit had been helpful

at all and I've been forced into the position of helping everybody else in my unit and I am not even in leadership.

We are now being looked at as an outcast and being forced to take a test every week when nobody else is being tested. People who are vaccinated are still getting sick but yet we are the ones who are being tested. We are not allowed to go on any trips or deployments. In my job we are supposed to be able and fully capable of going anywhere in the world at any given time. Because we are not getting this vaccine that allegedly makes us not medically ready. Therefore, we have to stay behind at home station and our supervision does not like that. They are talking about trying to figure out something that they can do to basically punish us and work more because we are left behind.

I will never understand why they're pushing so hard for us to get vaccinated using a vaccine on base that's not even the authorized one by FDA. We went a whole year until we saw our first Covid case in my unit and now they're trying to segregate us. We have only had I believe around six cases of Covid in my unit since this whole thing started. And the cases only started closer when the vaccine came out. We were doing just fine before the vaccine started coming out. You can't stop a virus from one shot you have to continuously develop it and change it because the virus mutates. We have already seen this with all the different variants. So I would like the leadership in the Guard to explain to me why I have to get a shot that's not even going to help us fight off this virus? I don't think that's a good reason to kick somebody out of the military who has been in for over 15 years.

Thank you for allowing us to bring attention to this treatment and please send any help you can our way.

Dear Senator Barrett,

I am sending this statement in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the DoD or the MIANG. I am also submitting this under protection of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.

Here are my terrible Experiences I have had through all of the chaotic exemption process in my unit:

- Earlier this year during a drill, a medical officer had gotten frustrated trying to convince us all to get vaccinated during our staff meeting that he finally said angrily "If you don't want to die, get the shot!"
- That officer, along with other officers, were overheard a few months later talking about how the fetal cell argument wasn't enough to get approved and touted off a few bible verses they knew. Due to this environment, I created a stress induced sick day and was then granted telework until they corrected the nature of everyone's conversations. (about 2-3 weeks)
- Throughout all of the virtual drills up to now we've received "vax facts" documents or articles. (email and pictures attached) that are completely one-sided and biased. This vaccine push has been one huge cruel psychological game.
- Once the actual mandate came through the chain there was almost no guidance until people like me kept bringing our concerns and such up. I had to keep asking and pushing for answers. Including emailing the medical unit on what version of the shot they had on hand. The answer I got after a long delay was "same same"
- While getting my RA put together I was given advice by a supervisor to add as much proof as I could to show that I was a part of a church (ex. Letter from a pastor) not just that I had a sincerely held religious belief. Luckily the chaplain during the actual interview said that wasn't necessary. This shows a complete lack of understanding at the levels of leadership about the Religious Freedom Restoration Act which caused many members to get vaxxed out of unconstitutional pressure of ignorance.
- I've recently been asked by supervisors if I have been looking for a job in preparation for getting denied.
- One member and friend of mine that didn't want to get the shot for religious reasons as well finally caved in fear for losing their job.



From an anonymous Guard member:

I am sending this statement in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the DoD or the MIANG. I am also submitting this under protection of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.

During my recent drill weekend, I was ordered to report to the DFAC for testing in spite of the fact I have a Religious Exemption request pending. When I arrived at the DFAC I requested the information sheet for the test. After confirming the information sheet did in fact say the test is NOT FDA approved, but is administered under EUA, I requested a consent form. I informed the Michigan National Guard Soldiers administering the tests that they were required by law to be acquiring written consent from 100% of the test subjects, and informing members of their right to refuse the test. They went right back to business as usual as though I had said nothing. As far as I know, out of the numerous members tested that morning, I am the only one who was given a written consent form, which I only signed out of extreme pressure. As expected for someone with documented natural immunity, my test result was negative.

I also believe that the administering of these tests as a tacit admission by the Command structure that a "less restrictive means" does in fact exist, negating the justification for their Religious Accommodation denials (and rendering said denials illegal) since the drill weekend went off without a hitch in spite of the many members that are not vaccinated.



Good afternoon Senator Barrett,

First I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and also thank you for your efforts in bringing attention to the situation we face as VAX-FREE service members. I am a member of the Michigan Air National Guard, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, MI. I have over 20 years of service and have had that career threatened because of opting out of receiving the Covid-19 vaccine. I have also submitted a religious accommodation request. There are 3 points I would like to discuss with you in this letter: the pressure to comply placed on our Airmen here at Selfridge, the current courses of action that are in play and the impact this mandate has had on troops within my purview, which I believe is an accurate sampling of the larger population.

Over the course of the last 2 – 3 months, the 127th Wing has identified those who have not received the vaccine and have begun trying to coerce us. Troops were directed to sign memorandums stating that we were counseled on vaccine administration being a direct order and a statement of our intent to receive or refuse the vaccine or seek either a medical or religious waiver/accommodation. In addition, there have been reports of Commanders and Senior Enlisted Leaders using pressure or isolation as reprisal against our vax-free status. A few examples include: side bar conversations stating the Wing Commander's intent to disapprove any exemption requests, medical personnel gloating over the fact that no exemptions have been granted for religious accommodation and future operational plans made with anticipation of these members not being a part of the organization. I will say that not every commander fits this description. There is a small minority sympathetic to our plight, however, it falls on deaf ears once it reaches higher organizational elevation.

At the time this letter was written, 6 December 2021, 1400, 127th Wing leadership has begun steps to discharge those who outright refuse vaccination and weekly testing of those who with exemptions in progress. The Wing has released a memorandum template for discharge recommendation. In addition, before we can report for duty, all vax-free personnel must report to the dining facility for screening. Most troops have expressed feeling discriminatory undertones about this and regard it as a mark of identifying the "troublemakers".

Lastly, the overwhelming majority of troops in my specific organization said they would not have gotten vaccinated if it wasn't for the threat of ending their careers or being classified as non-deployable and missing a troop movement. The feedback I get the most is why are we being forced if we are the most fit and need it the least, still required even if willing to submit to testing in order to mitigate the spread, the fact that we have all been working together already and most cases occur from outside contact and since the vast majority of people are already vaccinated how are a few outliers negatively affecting the organization. Many members have reached out to me to compliment on my willingness to stand against this mandate and they wish they had never gotten the vaccine.

Again, Senator, I thank you for your time in reading this. My hope is that your efforts are successful and help maintain the status of those of us who just want to continue to serve our country. I also hope that you consider conducting a survey of military members in the state so that leaders can see how troops feel about this issue. The number of vax-free personnel may not be as significant as some leaders think, however the ripple effect of losing seasoned troops and replacing them with new recruits will definitely have a negative impact on our lethality as a force during a time when our peer adversaries are ramping up their capabilities. The situation goes away if the Government would just be willing to

make some concessions. At this point it does not look like they are willing to budge....and neither are we. Be safe and we appreciate you.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter to inform you of my experience with the COVID-19 Vaccine and the Michigan Army National Guard.

Since the announcement of the vaccine mandate, I have received many phone calls, emails and in person conversations that have resulted in unnecessary stress placed on me due to the lack of understanding from my unit leaders for the process and implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine requirements and the exemption process.

Initially when informed about the mandate I informed my command that I would be seeking an exemption from the vaccine. I was not given any guidance on the process and was told there was no process at that time when in fact there was, and I received the information from someone outside of my unit on how to start the process. The first step of the process was to be counseled by my commander. I informed my command team that I needed to be counseled before I could anything else. Approximately two weeks went by before receiving any counseling. During those two weeks I was told multiple times that any exemptions would be denied and that I should just get the shot. I would receive phone calls after duty hours telling me to have my exemption packet turned in by a certain date usually in a day or two from the phone call or risk losing my job and career. I am the sole provider for my family and these uninformed threats placed additional stress on myself and family. Again, I was not counseled at this time saying I needed to accomplish anything at this point.

When I was finally counseled, I had already scheduled an appointment with my primary care manager to discuss the vaccine to due my current health issues and concerns regarding the vaccine. After my appointment my primary care manager recommended a temporary exemption from the vaccine. The specialist doctor I am seeing to help with current health issues also recommended not taking the vaccine. I completed my exemption packet and submitted it for review. I was asked for additional information that I gladly turned in. I even asked my primary care manager to write another note with a little more detail on the decision for the temporary exemption.

When my exemption was denied individuals within my own unit knew it was denied before I did. There was no privacy throughout this process. On multiple occasions I was harassed and my medical information was revealed in front of other unit members for not being vaccinated. I was also reprimanded for not following orders and was told that I was danger to the unit for not being vaccinated. Many times, leadership would try and coerce me into getting the vaccine and when I would state I would not get it they told me I should resign.

My exemption was denied due to it being for more than 90 days. The army regulation states that an exemption can be for up to 1 year. I do not feel comfortable going against what my doctors have advised for me, so I requested the appeal process. I was given a document that showed the route of my exemption going to the same office and personnel that denied it in the first time. Feeling as though they did not take the time to review the packet the first time and are not following army regulations, I do not see the point in going through the appeal process.

At this point I am giving up my ten plus years of service due to lack of trust in the Michigan National Guard. I will not go against the advice the professionals who know my health status and what is best for my body.

The process of what will happen to Soldiers who refuse is still unclear. I am tired of being harassed when I have made it clear that I will not be getting the Covid-19 vaccine. The problem is the leadership in this organization has decided to make up their own rules and requirements while not allowing Soldiers to work through the entire exemption process. I cannot trust an organization who doesn't take care of their Soldiers.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to share my experience as a Michigan Army National Guard Soldier who feels they were coerced to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

In one single day I received seven separate emails pertaining to the requirement to be vaccine. Those emails contained personal feelings on vaccination, excerpts from regulations and FRAGOs without providing the reference or entire document, and misinformation on the process and requirement. Upon receiving these emails and directive to receive the vaccine I immediately contacted my PCM to schedule an appointment. To my dismay, the next available appointment was not for three weeks, which was also the deadline to be vaccinated or lose my position and career. I have made countless sacrifices for my career and it is the primary means to support my family. In the time between receiving this guidance and my appointment, I received eleven additional emails containing person opinions, misinformation, excerpts without reference, and continued directive to receive the vaccine and not pursue an exemption. On numerous occasions my vaccination status was discussed with my entire unit, in the office, and in ridicule by my command and medical personnel. In one instance, I reported an issue to my command team and the response I received was as follows: "the state would call you out and ask as a leader why you don't have the shot. I have to remove you from mission because unvaccinated aren't allowed to work. That is a burden on those who are vaccinated and who now must pick up work for those who aren't". The issue I identified was not addressed because I am a burden to the unit is how that message was received by me. As a Soldier and a leader, I hope to never make another individual feel the way my command has made me feel throughout this process.

On the day of my appointment, the day of the requirement, my provider was not able to write me a medical exemption without additional follow up appointments. I felt like I either received the vaccine at that appointment or I would lose my position due to not meeting the artificial deadline opposed on me by the Michigan Army National Guard, ahead of the DoD deadline.

I now watch on and try to support my fellow Soldiers who are attempting to receive exemptions. I watch as they have requirements and processes changed last minute. As they receive countless emails littered with misinformation and threats. As commanders and medical personnel state they are supporting, however treat their Soldiers as if they are a burden because they are making their jobs hard or potentially threatening their careers by not complying.

Receiving the vaccine and being witness to the actions and processes at all levels of leadership, has had a drastic effect on my everyday life. I have lost my trust in my leadership from my immediate commander to The Adjutant General of the Michigan National Guard. Prior to this experience I intended to pursue a 20+ year career in the Michigan Army National Guard, now I no longer wish to serve beyond my current obligation. I have recently experienced new medical concerns and I am pursuing

treatment. However, due to my concern that it may be linked to my vaccination status, my unit medical personnel laughed in my face when I requested assistance. I did not pursue immediate medical treatment due to that encounter.

The actions at all levels of leadership will have lasting effects on the Michigan Army National Guard. Soldiers will leave due to their desire to not receive the vaccine. Others, like myself, will leave due to the actions and treatment throughout the process.

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing this testimony on my experience with Michigan National Guard and the COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

When it was announced that the vaccine would be required the memo pushed out by the Secretary of Defense said the Guard had until June of 2022 to become fully vaccinated. It was shortly after that an email came out saying all AGRs had until October 15, 2021 to be fully vaccine. This email gave little time for AGRs to start the exemption process (which hadn't been fully defined) and it was unclear if those who didn't get first dose on time would be ok to go past the 15th for the 2nd dose or still lose our jobs. There was confusion for everyone involved. A FRAGO was sent out stating that we were to be counselled by our commanders and if we refused, we would either work through the medical or religious exemption process or receive a General Officer Memorandum of Record (GOMOR) in our file. A GOMOR is considered a career killer. Once counseled we were given minimum amount of time to complete the process while at the same time the process and documents required were not clearly stated. To this day documents required are changing.

When the mandate came into effect, I was reluctant on what to do. I did not initially know that Soldiers had the right to request a religious exemption and did not understand the process. When hearing from others around the unit that a religious exemption was almost impossible, I felt discourage. I had heard that the vaccine had used fetal cells in the creation or testing process. After doing my own research I found that all three vaccines being offered used stem cells from fetal cells in some manner throughout the process. I did not agree with this and feel as though I cannot allow this vaccine into my body. I had asked my commander what was going to happen to me if I just didn't get the vaccine. He did not have an answer for me. I am currently active guard reserve and was advised to resign from the AGR program. I told the commander that I wanted to talk to the Chaplain about my options and he sent me his contact information after I had expressed my beliefs on why I could not get the covid-19 vaccine.

The next day I called the Chaplain to ask some questions about the religious exemption process and after our conversation I felt that I needed to proceed with the religious exemption process. We scheduled my interview for the next week while I gathered all the information for my exemption request. During that time, I received emails saying that if I didn't get vaccinated by the following Monday, I wouldn't be in compliance and on December 16th I would be placed on leave and at the end of my leave relieved from the AGR program. For those in the exemption process the plan was to also place them on leave until their exemption process had been completed. To my understanding of the regulation, you cannot give a Soldier an adverse action when working through this process. I was doing everything I was told to do for the exemption process and was still going to be forced to take leave.

At this time my exemption packet has been submitted. I found out through other individuals who submitted exemption requests that more information was needed and that mine could be rejected for not having everything in. So, I got the rest of the documents needed and resubmitted my packet. The process and documents required have changed multiple times making hard for Soldiers to ensure they have turned in all required information.

This process has been very taxing on myself and other Soldiers. My physical and mental health have been negatively affected and if it wasn't for my faith I do not know what would get me through this process. To this day we do not know what is going to happen to those of us who refuse the covid-19

vaccine. There needs to be a clear understanding of the process to ensure Soldiers rights are not being violated and that all Soldiers have the opportunity to present their religious beliefs and ensure that they can remain faithful to their God. I have already decided that even with the outcome of my exemption I will not be re-enlisting in the Michigan National Guard. I have lost all trust in my leadership and the leadership above them. I have no desire to serve for an organization who misleads, lies and coerces individuals into turning their back on their faith. A Soldier should never have to chose between their faith and service to their country.

Here are my Experiences I have had through all of the chaotic exemption process in my unit:

- Earlier this year during a drill, a medical officer had gotten frustrated trying to convince us all to get vaccinated during our staff meeting that he finally said angrily "If you don't want to die, get the shot!"
- That officer, along with other officers, were overheard a few months later talking about how the fetal cell argument wasn't enough to get approved and touted off a few bible verses they knew. Due to this environment, I created a stress induced sick day and was then granted telework until they corrected the nature of everyone's conversations. (about 2-3 weeks)
- Throughout all of the virtual drills up to now we've received "vax facts" documents or articles that are completely one-sided and biased. To me, this vaccine push has been one psychological game.
- Once the actual mandate came through the chain there was almost no guidance until people like me kept bringing our concerns and such up. I had to keep asking and pushing for answers. Including emailing the medical unit on what version of the shot they had on hand. The answer I got after a long delay was "same same"
- While getting my RA put together I was given advice by a supervisor to add as much proof as I could to show that I was a part of a church (ex. Letter from a pastor) not just that I had a sincerely held religious belief. Luckily the chaplain during the actual interview said that wasn't necessary. This shows a complete lack of understanding at the levels of leadership about the Religious Freedom Restoration Act which caused many members to get vaxxed out of unconstitutional pressure or ignorance.
- I've recently been asked by supervisors if I have been looking for a job in preparation for getting denied.
- One member and friend of mine that didn't want to get the shot for religious reasons as well finally caved in fear for losing their job.



Good afternoon Senator Barrett,

I am sending this statement in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the DoD or the MIANG. I am also submitting this under protection of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.

First I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and also thank you for your efforts in bringing attention to the situation we face as VAX-FREE service members. I am a member of the Michigan Air National Guard, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, MI. I have over 20 years of service and have had that career threatened because of opting out of receiving the Covid-19 vaccine. I have also submitted a religious accommodation request. There are 3 points I would like to discuss with you in this letter: the pressure to comply placed on our Airmen here at Selfridge, the current courses of action that are in play and the impact this mandate has had on troops within my purview, which I believe is an accurate sampling of the larger population.

Over the course of the last 2 – 3 months, the 127th Wing has identified those who have not received the vaccine and have begun trying to coerce us. Troops were directed to sign memorandums stating that we were counseled on vaccine administration being a direct order and a statement of our intent to receive or refuse the vaccine or seek either a medical or religious waiver/accommodation. In addition, there have been reports of Commanders and Senior Enlisted Leaders using pressure or isolation as reprisal against our vax-free status. A few examples include: side bar conversations stating the Wing Commander's intent to disapprove any exemption requests, medical personnel gloating over the fact that no exemptions have been granted for religious accommodation and future operational plans made with anticipation of these members not being a part of the organization. I will say that not every commander fits this description. There is a small minority sympathetic to our plight, however, it falls on deaf ears once it reaches higher organizational elevation.

At the time this letter was written, 6 December 2021, 1400, 127th Wing leadership has begun steps to discharge those who outright refuse vaccination and weekly testing of those who with exemptions in progress. The Wing has released a memorandum template for discharge recommendation. In addition, before we can report for duty, all vax-free personal must report to the dining facility for screening. Most troops have expressed feeling discriminatory undertones about this and regard it as a mark of identifying the "troublemakers".

Lastly, the overwhelming majority of troops in my specific organization said they would not have gotten vaccinated if it wasn't for the threat of ending their careers or being classified as non-deployable and missing a troop movement. The feedback I get the most is why are we being forced if we are the most fit and need it the least, still required even if willing to submit to testing in order to mitigate the spread, the fact that we have all been working together already and most cases occur from outside contact and since the vast majority of people are already vaccinated how are a few outliers negatively affecting the organization. Many members have reached out to me to compliment on my willingness to stand against this mandate and they wish they had never gotten the vaccine.

Again, Senator, I thank you for your time in reading this. My hope is that your efforts are successful and help maintain the status of those of us who just want to continue to serve our country. I also hope that you consider conducting a survey of military members in the state so that leaders can see

how troops feel about this issue. The number of vax-free personnel may not be as significant as some leaders think, however the ripple effect of losing seasoned troops and replacing them with new recruits will definitely have a negative impact on our lethality as a force during a time when our peer adversaries are ramping up their capabilities. The situation goes away if the Government would just be willing to make some concessions. At this point it does not look like they are willing to budge....and neither are we. Be safe and we appreciate you.

7 December 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

The views expressed in this letter are mine and not the views of the Department of Defense, or the Michigan Army National Guard.

I am a Soldier in the Michigan Army National Guard who has a strong belief against taking the COVID-19 vaccine. Below is my story and how my refusal has affected my beliefs, my family and my life.

I have over twenty two years of active military experience and over 28 years of total service - both in the Marine Corps and the Army.. Throughout my military career I have deployed to Iraq & Kuwait, attended numerous military service schools, received multiple Army Commendation Medals and recently earned the title of distinguished honor graduate for my Senior Leadership Course (SLC).

Recently, the lack of information provided by leadership has been very disconcerting. I have been counseled as to my refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, however, there is no information being provided as to what will happen if I don't receive the vaccine, the timeline, repercussions, etc. All I have to go on is the media, which is extremely negative. Additionally, senior leadership has treated me as if I have a disease and am an irresponsible Soldier for not receiving the vaccine. I am a Soldier in the Army who has, until recently, followed all orders given to me. I lead by example, I am proud to wear the uniform, however, I feel that I should have an opinion on vaccines that are injected into my body. Especially a vaccine that is as controversial as this latest and very new vaccine. It has not undergone rigorous or lengthy testing, but instead has been hotly debated in politics and the media. Neither of which gives me any confidence in the validity of the vaccine.

Additionally, my wife, was diagnosed with breast cancer during the COVID-19 pandemic and because the vaccine can mimic breast cancer-like conditions (swollen lymph nodes and breast lumps), she was cautioned by the University of Michigan and warned that if she did get the vaccine and had additional symptoms similar to breast cancer that she would have to wait an additional 6 months prior to having any tests to determine the validity of cancer. In my opinion, six months is a significant amount of time to wait before conducting any cancer related tests. She has had numerous complications and infections and most recently did receive the vaccine because she was pressured by her employer. This is a serious violation of her HIPPA and medical rights.

I have serious concerns of government overreach as it relates to the COVID-19 vaccine - when will the mandates stop? How many additional booster vaccines will we need to have to stop the fear that the government and the media are encouraging? When is it enough? Ironically, every Soldier needs to participate in online HIPPA training annually - but our employers civilian and military are tracking our vaccination status - or lack thereof - and using it against us to terminate

our employment. This is unconstitutional and unacceptable. And, now after serving my country honorably for over 28 years, I'm being forced out of the military and being treated as a disgraced and dishonorable Soldier. I am a patriot and am strong in my beliefs.

Sincerely,
A Patriot Soldier

I would like to begin by stating that I have dutifully served this great State of Michigan and the people of the United States of America for close to twenty years. I have deployed for combat operations in Iraq, Natural disaster relief to other States of the Union, as well as support for many domestic operations here in Michigan. I consider my oath and service to this country a great honor and a privilege. During the course of my career, I have been taught to treat everyone's view on life with respect even if I don't agree with what they believe.

What I would like to convey in the following personal testimony is that I would like to be treated with the same respect loyalty and integrity by my State leadership as I have dutifully practiced towards them over the course of my many years of service. However, for reason I do not understand the leadership of the State of Michigan has taken a toxic turn. There are established policies in place for Soldiers to follow as to get exemptions and or accommodations for many varied situations. In my case, I have sought a religious exemption based on my faith practice to the Covid vaccination mandate. I cannot overstate the level of my disappointment over the continued harassment, threats of adverse action, and gross manipulation of the established processes as to force me to act against my conscious. All that I ask us for fair treatment and due process as the process plays itself out.

With that in mind, I would like to personally thank Sen. Barrett and Rep. Alexander for their quick response and to the Appropriations Subcommittee for their willingness to review this matter.

To begin, the Michigan National Guard distributed a policy after Department of Defense published a policy regarding the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The policy had an informational process and a flow chart to follow as to filing documents, how to route the documents, as well as how to conduct appeals based on religious exemption and/or a medical exemption.

Based on this guidance, on October 04, 2021, I received my first formal counseling about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. The deadline for service members to submit a request for the exemption or receive the vaccine was October 15, 2021. The policy stated all exemption packets would be processed and no actions would be taken against Soldiers until the packets are formally reviewed and adjudicated. This was to include a subsequent appeal process if so requested by the affected Soldier[s]. If at the end of the appeals process it was determined that a given religious accommodation was to be denied, a Soldier would have a final opportunity to receive the vaccine without any adverse action. In my case, if I still declined at that point it was outlined that I would face some type of administrative action. It was implied by my Unit Leadership that I would be separated from service for bad conduct or dishonorable service, a status that equates me to that of a criminal with subsequent impact on my civil rights and access to military benefits.

After the deadline in early October as noted above, a subsequent Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) was published that changed the processes as to both the routing chain and procedures process along with an additional requirement being added for a Soldiers immunization record to be included. During the entirety of this process my unit leadership has been coercive and made threats towards me and other Soldiers in my unit undergoing the same legal process.

These threats include statements such as the following, "you are going to be removed from service", "it would be better for you to resign so you do not face punitive action", "they [the MIARNG Leadership] are not going to approve any exemptions", "you will not be allowed to retire with benefits [implying a dishonorable discharge]", "you will face charges with possible punishments" [implying I was disobeying a direct order, failed to fulfill contract obligations, and/or was willfully endangering other soldiers], "the Army does not care about the process". These are but a few of the many threats that took place during direct conversations either in person or over the phone. Again, all the Soldiers in my unit who are undergoing the process of requesting a religious exemption have experienced variations of this same treatment and threats of adverse actions.

On November 17, 2021 I was asked to go to the First Sergeant's office. During our conversation he stated that I was instructed to report to the headquarters building at 0800 Monday November 22, 2021 and to take the vaccine with or without my consent. If I failed to comply, I would be given until December 15, 2021 to be fully vaccinated. If I am not fully vaccinated on December 16, 2021, I was placed in an involuntarily leave status pending the determination of my religious exemption packet, something that with appeals could take months. It was articulated to me that once all my accumulated personal leave has been exhausted, I would be removed from my Active Duty status and placed back into an M-Day National Guard unit until June 2, 2021. On June 2, 2021 I would then be discharged and separated from the Army National Guard. Based on the previous threats made against me and confirmed by other members in my unit, I assumed it would be some type of punitive discharge status.

To this I stated to my unit First Sargent that I have a religious accommodation pending and it has not been processed yet. The First Sargent stated that it didn't matter and Michigan National Guard leadership did not view it as an adverse action to remove me from active status because I am not being separated from service. I would argue that losing my livelihood and ability to provide for my family is an adverse reaction. Because my First Sargent does not have this power or authority nor is it typical that a Senior NCO would make these kind of threats and in this manner I then asked him "who is this coming from". His response was that the Michigan Army National Guard Chief of Staff's Office sent out an email to unit leadership with these instructions and outlined what actions would follow to any Soldiers that refused to get the Covid vaccination despite any personal request for exemptions still being processed.

I subsequently asked my chain of command for clarification regarding instruction from the Chain-of-Command and if we needed to report to Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) if we had a pending exemption. My Commander stated he would reach out to JFHQ for further guidance. I value the Chain-

of-Command and I have always believed that any issues need to be worked out at the lowest level, but at this point I felt like my Chain-of-Command had completely broken down.

It was at this point that I reached out to Representative Julie Alexander to ask for help. Representative Alexander reached out to Senator Tom Barrett. I explained the situation and he reached out to the TAG's liaison for answers to many of the above questions that would naturally be raised. Senator Barrett and Representative Alexander received the answer relayed the response to me before my chain of command did.

My unit leadership has been less than supportive throughout this entire process and it is apparent that they do not have a clear picture on the administrative requirements. They have consistently ascribed blame upon Joint Force Headquarters, the Michigan Adjutant General, the Michigan Chief of Staff and other senior leaders for the hard line response against Soldiers despite published policy on how to request an exemption. To be fair, because of the many changes to the timelines and procedures it has been difficult for my unit leadership to stay abreast of numerous changes and retractions.

As for myself and Soldiers in my situation, it is very hard to complete the process if the requirements and guidelines keep changing. I understand I joined the military and its associated need for good order and discipline. Over the course of my career I have received countless vaccinations. Until recently I have never questioned receiving an immunization. However, based on the research, my personal religious beliefs and convictions I have a conscientious objection to this vaccine.

As I stated at the beginning of my testimony, I have rendered many years of honorable service to my State and to this great Nation with duty that took me to many of the worst situations or locations imaginable. I grew up in the Michigan Guard and continue to faithfully serve the Michigan Guard. Never have I seen a situation in which the leadership, from the top down has created a toxic command climate that affects hundreds of Michigan Guard Soldiers in a negative manner. The chain-of-command, from my immediate commander to the Adjutant General of the Michigan National Guard as identified by my Unit leadership has willfully disregarded National Guard Bureau policy procedure and process for what are legal courses of actions. Meanwhile the command has continuously threatened punitive action & attempted coercion as to force Soldiers against their will and against policy to take this vaccination. I and the Soldiers in position have served Faithfully & with Honor, all we ask is to be treated with decency & Honor until this administrative process plays itself out. As a NCO, I humbly request that the Chain-of-Command live by The Army Values. I am the same person as I was yesterday, as I was last week, last year, as I was in Iraq. Give me the dignity I deserve and show me the Honor that I have always shown you.



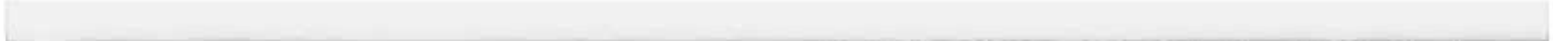
Dear Senator Barrett,

I am sending this statement in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the DoD or the State of Michigan. I am also submitting this under protection of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.

It is with great sorrow I share the story below, but I thank you Sir for your willingness to hear it. After fidelity to the US Constitution, I believe my greatest charge as an Officer here in Michigan is the defense/protection of my troops from all forms of harm within my sphere of influence. This seems an impossibility when that harm is not coming from our flanks, but from above. Sic Semper Tyrannis.

I became the Subject Matter Expert/PoC for Religious Accommodation Requests for the CoVID Vaccination Mandate for my unit. Several members later approached me with questions regarding the process and formalities involved in requesting an Accommodation on Religious grounds. Two of these members are young, one of whom has already suffered difficulty in trying to conceive a first child. Both of these members were concerned for the potential side-effects these injections posed to their future potential to conceive more children. I was able to answer their questions and provide the resources and documents necessary for these members to craft their exemption requests. During a subsequent drill, I inquired with the members whether they still intended to submit their Religious Accommodation Requests. Both members informed me they had been told by several other superior members that their requests would certainly be denied, which led them each to conclude this was a fruitless endeavor. They're both now vaccinated, and deeply concerned and stressed about the implications this has on their ability to have children in the future.

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