



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

ATTN: Laura S. Kaiser, President and Chief Executive Officer, SSM Health

CC: Ben Van Pelt, Director of Government Affairs, SSM Health - Wisconsin

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is seeking additional information regarding the vaccination policy that SSM Health announced on Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021.<sup>i</sup> Many employees of SSM Health have contacted us through our district offices regarding the policy of requiring a COVID19 vaccine as a condition of employment.

It is essential that the policies put in place by SSM Health are consistent with the values of medical freedom for the people you employ. We know that transparency is also important, especially in the medical field. Earning the trust of the community and its employees is necessary to maintain a presence in the State of Wisconsin.

Representative Thiesfeldt recently made a simple request for a copy of SSM Health's employee vaccination policy and has not received a response. Therefore, we the undersigned legislators submit the following questions to gather additional information regarding this policy and the standards to which SSM Health adheres regarding vaccination of employees.

The questions below are in no specific order, nor are they ranked by priority.

Questions and requests for clarification:

- 1) Does SSM Health have a written employee vaccination policy that is provided to employees?
  - a. If yes, please provide and describe in detail the vaccination policy.
  - b. If yes, when was this policy enacted and what alterations have been made since January 1, 2020?
  - c. If yes, using what method and how frequently are employees informed of the policy and/or changes to the policy?
  - d. If not, why is this policy not available in writing?

- 2) What is SSM Health's current COVID19 testing policy?
- 3) What was the COVID testing policy during 2020?
- 4) Please provide the data for employees unvaccinated/vaccinated for all required types of vaccinations as of the most recent tabulation.
- 5) Please provide the number of medical and/or religious exemptions granted for the vaccine.
- 6) Please describe the application for an exemption and the process of approving or denying an exemption?
- 7) Are employees informed of the associated health risks of receiving a required vaccination?
- 8) Will SSM Health bear legal liability for any adverse reaction to any required vaccinations suffered by an employee?
- 9) After receiving results of an COVID19 test administered by SSM Health, are employees (or patients) provided resources that instruct how to combat the virus?
- 10) Has or will SSM Health or any affiliate be the recipient of federal funding for reaching a prescribed level of COVID-19 vaccinated employees?
- 11) How many employees of Wisconsin-based SSM Health have been terminated or voluntarily left as a result of a reluctance to comply with SSM Health's COVID19 vaccination policy?
- 12) How many beds are currently not utilized due to staff shortages?
- 13) Based on staffing requirements for nursing care as of January 1, 2020, at what percentage are each Wisconsin-based SSM Health hospitals?
- 14) If nursing or other staffing shortages occur due to terminations/withdrawals over the COVID19 vaccination, how does SSM Health plan to provide adequate care to patients when hospital beds and ICU beds are nearly full<sup>iii</sup>?
- 15) When the COVID19 vaccination policy was announced on June 28, 2021, the regional interim president for Wisconsin stated, "we haven't yet reached a level of vaccination

that provides herd immunity.”<sup>iii</sup> If herd immunity is the target, at what local, state, or national level would SSM Health relax its COVID19 vaccination policy?

16) Is vaccination required for employees who have already contracted COVID-19? If so, what evidence does SSM Health have that proves a vaccination provides a longer-lasting immunity than a natural immunity?

17) SSM Health labels itself as a Catholic organization,<sup>iv</sup> however, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference stated in a press release on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 that, “the Church recognizes the right of individual conscience...They affirm that a person should not be coerced into receiving vaccinations.”<sup>v</sup> Additionally, Catechism 1776-1802 (especially 1790) describes the Judgement of Conscience and Erroneous Judgement, and institutions should protect the conscience of an individual.<sup>vi</sup> Please explain why SSM Health’s employee COVID19 vaccination policy does not allow for a conscientious exemption along the lines of church teaching?

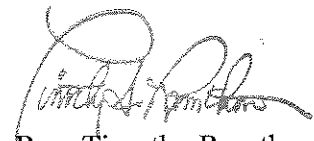
Thank you for considering the questions above as this certainly is an urgent matter. We thank your organizations' assistance in answering these questions and would appreciate a prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt  
52<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District

Rep. Michael Schraa  
53rd Assembly District



Rep. Timothy Ramthun  
59<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

<sup>i</sup> “SSM Health Urges the Public to Get Vaccinated Against Covid-19; Requires All Team Members to Be Vaccinated by Late September.” SSM Health, June 28, 2021. <https://www.ssmhealth.com/newsroom/2021/6/ssm-health-urges-vaccine-and-requires-employees>.

<sup>ii</sup> O'Neill, Madalyn. “Not AGAIN’: Nurses Face Burnout as DELTA Surge Fills Hospital Beds.” Channel3000.com, September 1, 2021. <https://www.channel3000.com/not-again-nurses-face-burnout-as-delta-surge-fills-hospital-beds/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Rude, Logan. “SSM Health to Require COVID-19 Vaccination for All Employees by Late September.” Channel3000.com, June 28, 2021. <https://www.channel3000.com/ssm-health-to-require-covid-19-vaccination-for-all-employees-by-late-september/>.

<sup>iv</sup> “Our Mission & Values.” SSM Health. Accessed September 7, 2021. <https://www.ssmhealth.com/resources/about/mission-values>.

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<sup>v</sup> Wisconsin Catholic Conference. "Wisconsin Bishops Address Vaccination and Conscience Protection." Wisconsin Catholic Conference News and Press Releases, August 20, 2021. <https://www.wisconsinatholic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Final-WCC-Media-Release-WI-Bishops-Address-COVID-19-Vaccination-and-Conscience-Protection-8-20-2021-link.pdf>.

<sup>vi</sup> "Moral Conscience," in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012.