

January 21, 2021

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 5

Dear Chairman Jacque and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, Children and Families:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 5, related to prohibiting mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for employment.

Long-term care (LTC) providers have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Caregivers have worked valiantly to protect residents from this devastating virus. The most meaningful opportunity for LTC providers to succeed in the battle against COVID-19 is widespread vaccination of staff and residents.

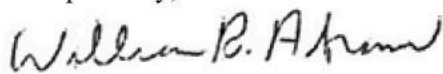
Unfortunately, there have been varying levels of acceptance of the vaccine among some caregivers. In practice, most providers would not choose to make vaccination a condition of employment. However, providers who serve those most vulnerable to health risks from COVID-19 should be granted the discretion to determine whether vaccination against COVID-19 should be a condition of employment, depending on careful and thoughtful consideration – weighing factors such as the health and safety of residents and staff, current staffing levels, and community spread of COVID-19.

Please note: the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) recently issued guidance which states that employers can generally mandate workers get vaccinated against COVID-19, with certain exceptions.

Long-term care providers request that Senate Bill 5 be amended to allow LTC providers, and perhaps other health care providers, the ability to make COVID-19 vaccination a condition of employment if a facility's administration, in consultation with its clinical staff and advisors as appropriate, conclude that the health, safety and welfare of the facility's residents and staff require that all employees receive the COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of employment.

WHCA/WiCAL and LeadingAge Wisconsin are prepared to work with Senator Jacque and other health care stakeholders to assist in amendment language.

Respectfully,



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