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WISCONSIN FAITH VOICES FOR JUSTICE SUBMITS AMICUS BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF 'SAFER AT HOME'

On April 29, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice filed an amicus brief with the Wisconsin Supreme Court in support of the Safer at Home order and in opposition to the suit filed by the Republican leadership seeking to block that order.

The brief included letters from 29 clergy and faith leaders, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Catholic, and Quaker, all refuting the suit's contention that Safer at Home has led to "decreased access to community and religious support." To the contrary, the letters all demonstrated the strength, resiliency, and creativity of the faith communities in quickly moving their worship, pastoral care, religious instruction, and programming online. They attested to the fact that moving online in many cases made worship and other activities more accessible, rather than less, to those who would otherwise be unable to participate due to age, disability, or geographic distance.

Recognizing that people are stressed and anxious, and that all look forward to the day when we can all be together in our houses of worship again, nevertheless, religious life has continued and the support of one's faith community is still there, as vibrant as ever.

In a letter from Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice (WFVJ) appended to the brief, WFVJ Executive Director Rabbi Bonnie Margulis said in part, "As a rabbi, I look to Jewish tradition to inform my values and beliefs. For Jews, pikuach nefesh – saving a life – is paramount above all other commandments... This virus most cruelly affects the most vulnerable in our society – the elderly, the immune-compromised, and particularly and disproportionately affects African Americans and other communities of color. Social distancing has been shown in past pandemics to slow the spread of disease, and it seems to be doing the same now. The Safer at Home order is effective, and necessary, to keep us all safe."

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice draws on the wisdom, courage, and strength of our various faith traditions to advance the common good. United as progressive people of faith, we move people and government through education and advocacy to raise the dignity and address the needs of the hungry, poor, and marginalized, to care for the sick, and to lift up all voices.

A letter from Wisconsin Council of Churches Executive Director Reverend Kerri Parker noted, “The Christian church does not need to gather in buildings in large numbers to be the church. For a very long time when the church began, we gathered in small numbers in homes, doing ministry as individuals and in small groups. Churches have had many worship, teaching, and ministry patterns over two thousand years of history; the church is profoundly adaptable. There is no reason we cannot continue dispersed practices for some time, for the good of all.”

Rabbi Margulis’ letter concluded with an acknowledgement of the terrible economic fallout from the Safer at Home order but asserted that the remedy to this crisis is not to open the state prematurely and risk everyone’s health. Rather it is for the Legislature to get back to work, to pass a relief bill that will help those who need it most. Therefore, WFVJ and the faith-based organizations, clergy, and lay leaders signed on below join together to urge the Court to keep Safer at Home in place until such time as the Governor, in consultation with scientists and public health experts, deems it safe to begin implementation of the Badger Bounce Back plan.

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
Clergy names and affiliations (for identification purposes only)
Names follow.....

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