

Model Letter: Requesting Religious Accommodation in the Face of COVID-19 Vaccine Workplace Mandate

Dear [Name of Human Resources Officer or other appropriate supervisor]:

On [set forth date], I and other employees of [name of employer] were notified that all employees must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide proof thereof or face termination of our employment. This letter will serve as my formal notice to [name of employer] of the following:

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccination would violate my sincerely-held religious beliefs, practices and/or observances. The following is a description of my religious beliefs that prevent me from receiving the COVID-19 vaccination: [include here a description of your religious beliefs in opposition to receiving the vaccine. If possible, include references to religious texts or statements by leaders of your religion supporting your opposition, although neither are necessary to support a sincerely-held religious belief]. Under established law, including the U.S. Constitution, the definition of religion is broad and protects beliefs, practices, and observances which may be unfamiliar, so an employer must assume that an employee's statement of objection to a vaccination requirement is based on a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance.

Because receiving the COVID-19 vaccination would violate my sincerely-held religious beliefs, I hereby request an accommodation of those beliefs with respect to the recently-imposed vaccination requirement. Under Title VII of the federal civil rights laws, an employer may not discharge or otherwise discriminate against an individual because of the individual's religion. 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a)(1). As the U.S. Supreme Court has held, this law requires an employer to seek to accommodate an employee whenever there is a conflict between a requirement of the employment and the employee's religious beliefs, practices or observances. *Trans World Airlines, Inc. v. Hardison*, 432 U.S. 63 (1977). An accommodation that fully eliminates the conflict with my religious beliefs must be provided unless any and all accommodations would impose an undue hardship. To the extent the law of the [State or Commonwealth where employed] imposes a similar duty to accommodate the religious beliefs, practices or observances of employees, I hereby invoke any and all rights under state law as well.

Having formally notified [name of employer] of the conflict between the COVID-19 vaccination requirement and my religious beliefs, I look forward to receiving in a prompt and timely manner your decision on what accommodation you will provide. Failing that, I reserve my right to pursue legal remedies available to me with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or otherwise in accordance with established law.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

[Your name printed]