

Letter of Support for House Bill 1323

Dear Respected Members of the House,

I am writing to you today in support of House Bill 1323. My wife and I are part of the minority when it comes to wearing masks as both of us have medical conditions where wearing a mask is impossible. At the beginning of the whole pandemic when this was just a thought we did not pay attention, but then the mandates started to happen.

We told ourselves that it was not that bad, that they would not require them in Bismarck. That our elected officials would be better than that, to leave it to personal responsibility. We spent months facing ridicule being chastised and accused of not caring for others because we did not wear a face covering in public. It got to the point where my wife would not leave the house without me.

In September when this came to a head in Bismarck and Mandan, we listened very careful to the entire meeting. We had watched the news that day as Mayor Bakken said that it would not be coming to a vote or even a topic of discussion.

Then it happened. The proposal for the mandate. Hours of testimony as we sat quietly in our home listening to everything on Dakota Access, hoping that common sense would hold out. At the end it was suspended for a later date.

I did speak at the Morton County meeting two days later regarding the mask mandate which again we were assured that it would not be brought forward for a vote. I sat and listened intently because a mask mandate would affect my ability to work. After the doctor from custard health spoke in favor of the mask mandate I got up to talk.

I am a quiet man and have been my entire life. I had carefully written out everything I was going to say, but as I began to talk the emotion and fear of the unknown took over and I spoke from the heart. I spoke candidly about my condition, something that is very hard for me to do with family much less than with strangers. I spoke of the vaccine damage my wife had suffered in her early 20's. After I finished I quickly left as this is not the environment for me to be in.

Afterwards others like myself thanked me for speaking both in person and heartfelt messages on facebook. For standing to speak when they couldn't find the strength to do it for themselves. I continued to go to meetings in Bismarck and Mandan to speak again if I needed to on this issue because a mask mandate would literally make my employer choose between me and fines for me not wearing a mask.

This is a decision that no employee should have to do. Choose between their job and their health and here I was talking to people I didn't know over and over again.

The pinnacle of this was the meeting in Bismarck on October 27th. While I sat patiently waiting to speak and letting others go before me working up the nerve to talk my wife waited outside as they would not let her into the city commission building.

After I spoke we left quickly. It was not until we were home that I learned while I was inside 2 officers from the Bismarck police Department had denied her and my 3 year old daughter access to the building so my little girl could go to the restroom. The reason my wife was given was the building was at capacity.

They denied a child access to use the restroom that was literally right inside the door. As my wife carried our little girl down the street a reporter for KX tried to talk with her about it but as there were more

pressing things on her mind. Thankfully the amazing staff at fireflour allowed her to use their restrooms even though she was not a paying customer.

It went further though on November 13th when the governor put the mask mandate in place. Thankfully my employers have been very understanding, but as they are aware of what I deal with everyday they were very accommodating to me while the statewide mandate was in place. I have a badge that I have to wear that says I cannot wear a mask for health reasons but that has not stopped people from treating us like trash.

I have spent almost a year being treated like I am not human.

My daughter has been denied access to basic services by people whom we have taught her to respect.

My wife rarely leaves the house.

We have a list of businesses that we will never go to again because of the treatment that we have received since March 13th of last year.

Today you have a way to stop at least a small part of what happened to my little family from ever happening again.

Sincerely

Marvin Lepp