



March 4, 2022

Committee Members,

RE: **HB1267**

In good faith, our church cooperated with our governmental leaders and willingly followed their guidelines for a season when they put executive orders in place along with empowering an unelected health officer to dictate how churches should worship.

We attempted to be good citizens yet remain faithful worshippers. However, we quickly realized that the forced mandate to wear face coverings during our services would not allow us to do both. As a church we made the decision that we would no longer comply with a forced mandate to wear face coverings during our worship services. This decision was made for many reasons, including but not limited to, our ability to effectively communicate, praise and worship, and emotionally connect with God and one another. Instead, we decided to enact an individual choice policy in our facilities. We would no longer force someone to wear a mask, and we encouraged anyone who wanted to wear one to do so.

For over two hundred years the state of Maryland has stood as a safe haven for religious freedom and offered protection for its citizens to worship in a way led by their individual conscience. When threatened with fines and other retaliations for not complying with a forced mandate to cover our faces, which restricted our ability to worship our God freely, we were betrayed by our leaders who swore an oath to protect our right to freedom of religion.

We urge the members of this committee to give **HB1267** a favorable report and protect the right of churches to worship freely in a manner consistent with their faith and practice.

After much prayer and discussion with our elected officials, attorneys and other pastors, and with God's leadership, our church has made the decision that we will not allow orders by government or otherwise to ever again dictate how we conduct our worship services. This conclusion comes from the scriptural teaching of **Acts 5:29** which says, "**Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.**" We would prefer to live and work in harmony with our leaders and would strongly request a favorable report for **HB1267** in order to do so.

Should you need further information concerning this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone or email at (443)454-9223 or pastorarcand@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Paul J Arcand II
Pastor

**195 Ritchie Highway • Severna Park, Maryland 21146
410-977-9389 • www.lbc4me.org • Paul J. Arcand II, Pastor**