



GREAT LAKES — JUSTICE CENTER —

WILLIAM R. WAGNER
PRESIDENT

JACK C. JORDAN
SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL

JOHN S. KANE
SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL

DAVID A. KALLMAN
SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL

STEPHEN P. KALLMAN
SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL

ERIN E. MERSINO
SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL

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CONTACT: DAVID A. KALLMAN
517-993-9123
dave@greatlakesjc.org

SETTLEMENT REACHED IN WMU ATHLETES' RELIGIOUS RIGHTS LAWSUIT

*Plaintiffs can continue to participate in Intercollegiate Athletics
without being mandated to take the Covid Vaccine*

Kalamazoo, Michigan – Federal District Court Judge Paul L. Maloney has received a stipulated Consent Judgment to enter a Permanent Injunction allowing the sixteen athletes at Western Michigan University (WMU) to continue playing intercollegiate sports despite refusing a Covid-19 vaccine shot mandated by WMU. The prior Preliminary Injunction had been upheld in a unanimous, published decision by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. Appellate Judges Ralph B. Guy, Jr., David W. McKeague, and Chad A. Readler, issued a published opinion that WMU violated the athletes' First Amendment rights by denying their requests for a religious exemption from the mandate. That decision is now binding precedent in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The entry of the Consent Judgment and Permanent Injunction with the District Court will close the case.

The Great Lakes Justice Center (GLJC), on behalf of sixteen athletes, filed the federal civil rights lawsuit challenging WMU's unlawful denial of their request for religious accommodation from the college's vaccine mandate to participate in sports. The students represent numerous teams at WMU including the football, baseball, women's basketball, women's soccer, dance team, and cross-country programs. In a joint statement, GLJC and WMU agreed:

“The student athletes involved in the vaccine lawsuit and Western Michigan University have reached a settlement of the pending litigation, allowing both parties to move forward. The settlement entails the students in the suit being awarded permanent relief from the athletics vaccine mandate, although they will continue to abide by testing and masking requirements. The University will pay their legal fees in the amount of \$34,000. The Court of Appeals acknowledged that all parties were acting in good faith. The University wishes the student athletes well in their academic and athletic careers, and the student athletes are excited to continue their academic and athletic careers at WMU.”

David A. Kallman, Senior Counsel with GLJC, stated, “We are pleased that WMU has agreed to resolve this matter, that our clients' religious convictions were vindicated, and that they can continue to be part of their teams, be with their teammates, and compete for WMU at the highest level in a safe manner.”

The Consent Judgment and Permanent Injunction is posted at the Great Lakes website at www.greatlakesjc.org/cases/dahl_v_wmu/.

The Great Lakes Justice Center is a non-profit organization defending First Amendment liberties and other civil rights issues. The attorneys at the center have spent countless hours to protect its client's constitutional freedoms and are grateful to minister to such important causes. To support the Great Lakes Justice Center's important work to protect our nation's first freedoms, please visit them at www.greatlakesjc.org.