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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice and the undersigned congregations, organizations, clergy, and people of faith, stand together to affirm the dignity and worth of the LGBTQ+ community and to oppose dangerous legislation that causes harm to members of the community. And make no mistake, legislation that seeks to bar youth from gender-affirming medical care, and that seeks to bar students from team sports, does grave harm.

Gender-affirming care is life-saving medical care. It is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, and nearly every other major American medical association. Legislators who have no medical training should not be in the position of substituting their judgement for that of medical and mental health experts. Nor should they be substituting their judgement for that of parents who want to support and affirm their children's gender identity.

When we ban transgender and non-binary children from participating in school sports, we deny them the opportunity afforded to other students to learn leadership skills, the value of teamwork, and the discipline of hard work and cooperation toward a common goal. But even more importantly, we send them and the rest of the community the message that trans youth are not worthy of the same rights and opportunities as other kids. We send the message that members of the transgender community are somehow 'less than', 'Other', less worthy of being treated with the same dignity and respect as everyone else.

The stigma created by these messages is the reason depression, anxiety, and suicidality are at a crisis level in the LGBTQ+ community. According to the Trevor Project's 2020 National Youth Survey on LGBTQ mental health, 40% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous 12 months, with more than half of trans and nonbinary youth having considered it.

By contrast, transgender youth whose families support their gender identity have a 52% decrease in suicidal thoughts, a 48% decrease in suicide attempts and a significant increase in self-esteem and general health.

The members of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice come from many different faith traditions. We are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Baha'i, Wiccan, Hindu, Quaker, Unitarian, and others. We have different beliefs and practices. But all our faiths teach the same basic value that honors the worth and dignity of every human being and the imperative above all else to love others as we love ourselves and to do no harm.

This past June, the Human Rights Campaign declared a national state of emergency for the LGBTQ+ community because of the rise of hate speech and hate actions against the community and because of the unprecedented rise of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation across the country. In response to this declaration, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, 27 other organizations and congregations, and nearly 200 clergy and people of faith issued a statement of support for the LGBTQ+ community. The statement said, in part:

“We stand united in our belief that our LGBTQ+ siblings are beloved and sacred. Each person should feel safe and nurtured in our communities... We call on our legislators and elected officials at all levels of government to block or oppose anti-LGBTQ+ bills, ordinances, and policies... Instead, we challenge our political leaders to put forth policies and proposals that celebrate, affirm, and protect LGBTQ+ people.”

As faith leaders of various sexual orientations and gender identities, we recognize that an attack on one of us is an attack on us all. Therefore, we cannot and will not remain silent in the face of injustice towards our LGBTQ+ colleagues, congregants, family, friends, and neighbors. We call upon our legislature to refrain from doing harm to the trans community and to vote against these dangerous bills, and we dedicate ourselves to advocating for policies that enable everyone to thrive.

Signed:

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Bethany United Methodist Church, Madison, WI
Circle Sanctuary, Barneveld, WI
Community of Hope United Church of Christ, Madison, WI
Congregation Emanu-El of Waukesha
Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun, Milwaukee, WI
Congregation Shaarei Shamayim
ESTHER
First Baptist Church of Madison
First Congregational UCC, Janesville, WI
First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee
First Unitarian Society Social Justice Ministry, Madison, WI
Fitchburg Memorial United Church of Christ
Five Points Lutheran Church
Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Appleton, WI
Madison First United Methodist Church
Midvale Lutheran Church, Madison, WI
Milwaukee Metropolitan Community Church
The Vestry of St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Madison

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Monona, WI
Temple Beth El, Madison, WI
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