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**BUSINESS AND HEALTH CARE GROUPS ISSUE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO LEGISLATIVE ACTION ON VACCINE REQUIREMENTS**

**CHARLESTON, WV** – The members of our organizations know that vaccines are the best tool available to protect one another and bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our state has made great progress in getting as many residents vaccinated as possible and the organizations we represent have followed suit with our respective workforces.

Existing federal direction through the American Disability Act (ADA) and Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act provides substantial guidance in processes regarding both medical and religious exemption requests, which is the subject of legislation introduced during the current Special Session of the West Virginia Legislature.

We are concerned that members of the Legislature are considering a bill requiring all business, for-profit and not-for profit, to accept an employee's request for COVID exemption from vaccination for medical (including those who have developed antibodies from being exposed to COVID) and religious beliefs.

At this time of great uncertainty for the businesses our organizations represent, we urge the Legislature to postpone action on HB 335 until we have the opportunity to fully review and discuss the ramifications of this bill and what transpires on the federal level.

West Virginia businesses are currently awaiting guidance on the federal level regarding some form of vaccine requirement that will apply for employers with 100 or more employees. We believe State action now is premature and will conflict with this expected federal guidance.

State legislative action will create a patchwork of rules and regulations for West Virginia businesses and health care organizations who will be forced to navigate between federal policy and conflicting state law.

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