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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Files Brief Supporting Plaintiffs in Gainesville Vaccine Mandate Case



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today filed a brief in support of the plaintiffs in the Darris Friend, et al. v. City of Gainesville case. Attorney General Moody's brief supports a challenge by city employees, including police officers, against the city's vaccine requirements for all municipal employees. Highlighting a police officer shortage and the likelihood that the plaintiffs will prevail, Attorney General Moody is requesting the court grant emergency relief.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Seeking a vaccine is a decision based on personal medical history and individual circumstances. It's a decision I made earlier this year after consulting with my family and medical professionals. I want more eligible Floridians to seek out information about the vaccine and make a deliberate, informed decision about their health. However, the government forcing compliance by our first responders is wrong. I am proud to stand with Governor DeSantis against this local-government overreach and in support of our law enforcement officers."

Governor Ron DeSantis said, "What we are seeing out of Washington D.C. and local governments like the City of Gainesville and Orange County should alarm Floridians, and raises important questions – if you can have people like firefighters who put lives on the line every day forced to either lose their jobs or get the vaccine regardless of immunity, how does that protect our community or keep us safer? It doesn't. This is political, it's about using government power to control. We're going to protect these jobs, we're going to protect livelihoods and we're going to

protect families. These big government mandates strip away people's rights to make the best decision for themselves, but we are going to protect Floridians from federal and local government overreach. That is why I signed SB 2006 in May, because Floridians, not any governmental entity, are responsible for taking charge of their personal health."

Attorney General Moody filed the brief today in Florida's Eighth Judicial Circuit Court in Alachua County. The brief outlines the public safety threat that could be created by the City of Gainesville's vaccine requirement. The nation, including Florida, is experiencing shortages in police staffing. The resulting shortages could lead to longer wait times, fewer crimes solved and an overall lower quality of life in affected areas. The brief highlights efforts by the state of Florida to mitigate the shortage and how the city's vaccine requirements work against those efforts.

The brief reads, "But as the State seeks to ensure adequate police protection for its citizens, the City of Gainesville is undermining those efforts, threatening to fire police, first responders, and other city employees over the deeply personal decision to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Forcing police officers out of their jobs is contrary to public safety and is therefore contrary to the public interest."

The filing goes on to outline the plaintiff's likelihood to prevail given that the city's policy violates Section 381.00316(2) F.S.S., which forbids a government entity from requiring a person to provide documentation certifying receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine to gain access to governmental operations in Florida.

Attorney General Moody is asking the court for emergency relief enjoining the city from requiring all city employees to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine. To read the filing, click here.