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Mayo Clinic Employees Win Appeal at Eighth Circuit Based on Employment Claim for Religious Accommodations from COVID Vaccination and Other Requirements

May 24, 2024. Today, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit issued the attached decision reversing the lower court's decision to dismiss Mayo Clinic employees' claims for accommodations from COVID vaccination and other requirements. The appellate court reversed the district court for three errors in interpreting both federal and state law. First, the district court erred in interpreting federal law requiring exhaustion of administrative remedies. Second, the district court erred in determining the plaintiffs failed in pleading religious beliefs that conflict with Mayo's Covid-19 policies. And, third, the district court erred in its interpretation of the Minnesota Human Rights Act. The appellate court remanded the case to the lower court for more proceedings.

The appellate court victory paves the way for over 100 Mayo Clinic and other employees to pursue monetary damages in U.S. District Court for Mayo Clinic's violations of federal law and state law. Mayo Clinic took adverse employment actions against the employees for violating Mayo's Covid-19 policies, without providing religious accommodations. Additionally, the appellate court victory may have a nationwide impact. The U.S. Court of Appeals decision addresses legal issues yet unresolved in other federal and state courts nationwide.

The plaintiffs' attorney Greg Erickson stated, "We are elated at the 8th Circuit's decision to follow clearly-established law relating to Title VII (federal law) and the Minnesota Human Rights Act. We are also very appreciative of the support of the federal agency called the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in defending the religious liberties of our clients by participating in this successful appeal."

Mohrman, Kaardal & Erickson, P.A. has a nationwide courtroom practice leveling the playing field for the working class in lawsuits against large governmental and non-governmental entities. Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit American academic medical center employing over 7,300 physicians and scientists, along with another 66,000 administrative and allied health staff, across three major campuses: Rochester, Minnesota; Jacksonville, Florida; and Phoenix/Scottsdale, Arizona. The law firm representing Mayo Clinic is Littler Mendelson which presents as the largest labor and employment law firm in the United States.

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