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A group of 117 Houston-area hospital employees on Friday filed a civil lawsuit against an employer hospital's coronavirus vaccine mandate. The lawsuit alleges that the mandate violates both the <u>Nuremberg Code</u> and <u>U.S. statutes</u> that allow Americans to refuse "unapproved" medical treatments. It also alleges violations of Texas labor and employment laws.

That "people" are "trying to force you to put something into your body that you're not comfortable with to keep your job is just insane," lead plaintiff **Jennifer Bridges** told Houston CBS affiliate KHOU.

The defendants are The Methodist Hospital, the Methodist Hospital System, and Houston Methodist The Woodlands Hospital. The people in charge of those entities responded to the litigation by saying the plaintiffs are but a small minority of voices among 26,000 employees and that it is "legal for health care institutions to mandate vaccines."

The Lawsuit.

The sharply worded 56-page complaint argues that the COVID-19 vaccines currently on the market were authorized merely as "emergency" measures and, thus, are not fully "approved" vaccines.

At the top of the document are words attributed to **David Bernard**, the CEO of Houston Methodist San Jacinto Hospital: "100% vaccination is more important than your individual freedom. Everyone [sic] of you is replaceable. If you don't like what your [sic] doing you can leave and we will replace your spot."

Those alleged words did not sit well with the plaintiffs.

"For the first time in the history of the United States, an employer is forcing an employee to participate in an experimental vaccine trial as a condition for continued employment," the lawsuit argues.

The document continues by alleging that the defendant hospital "became the first major health care system in the country to force it [sic] employees to be injected with an experimental COVID-19 mRNA gene modification injection ('experimental vaccine') or be fired."

"Methodist Hospital is forcing its employees to be human 'guinea pigs' as a condition for continued employment," the lawsuit's opening paragraph also says.

The Washington Post on May 14 reported that the coronavirus vaccines available in the U.S. are no longer considered "experimental" because they have "completed clinical trials and have been authorized for emergency use." The same report quotes a bevy of experts who asserted that the current vaccines are safe while noting that millions of Americans have been vaccinated without serious harm.

Still, the plaintiff employees remain skeptical.

"[T]here is much the FDA does not know about these products even as it authorizes them for emergency use, including their effectiveness against infection, death, and transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that is allegedly the cause of the COVID disease," the lawsuit claims.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on Friday updated its COVID-19 vaccination guidance documents for employers.

"Federal EEO laws do not prevent an employer from requiring all employees physically entering the workplace to be vaccinated for COVID-19, so long as employers comply with the reasonable accommodation provisions of the ADA and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other EEO considerations," the new EEOC technical assistance document reads.

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cover image credit: Mark Felix for The Washington Post Lead plaintiff Jennifer Bridges is a nurse at Houston Methodist