

New Kentucky Law Preserves Vaccine Exemptions Even During Pandemic

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Legislation passed with bipartisan support preserves certain vaccine exemptions, including religious and medical, even if the state mandates vaccines during a pandemic.

by [Stephanie Locricchio](#), [The Defender](#)

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Kentucky residents will have the right to refuse vaccinations on the basis of religious, medical and conscientiously held beliefs, even during a pandemic, under a bill signed into law March 28, without the signature of Gov. Andy Beshear.

[Senate Bill 8](#) was created by Republican Senator Mike Wilson in response to concerns about potential COVID [vaccine mandates](#). Kentucky has not yet mandated the vaccines, but a pre existing law allowed the state to mandate vaccines during a pandemic.

The Kentucky House of Representatives passed the bill with bipartisan support, breaking the typical pattern of party line voting on health freedom bills.

[Kentucky Medical Freedom Coalition](#) (KMFC), a grassroots organization founded in 2020, has been tirelessly advocating for health freedom. Two of the organization's officers, Mary Kathryn DeLodder and Bethany Clark, worked with their team to raise awareness on issues and legislation, including Senate

Bill 8, that impact health freedom. Together they built relationships with elected officials and the community.

While this bill is a win for Kentucky, there is growing concern all over the country about businesses and employers requiring [COVID vaccines](#) for employers and customers. DeLodder said the work continues in 2022 to protect employees from mandates, as [S.B. 8](#) does not apply to Kentucky's private businesses.

DeLodder and Clark have been doing this work since 2017. They recognized the need for a formal organization and worked with their team to create KMFC. Their work includes educating, empowering and uniting concerned citizens to take action and be part of the medical freedom conversation.

The two women advise other advocates looking for ways to make a difference to understand the makeup of their state legislature, seek out like-minded, like-hearted people and work together to create change.

DeLodder and Clark said this recent win was a result of the collaborative efforts of Kentucky citizens taking action.

A bi-partisan win in Kentucky proves the tide is turning and medical freedom is being honored in many states. Advocates can learn from Kentucky's and other states' best practices and build on their momentum.

Now is the time to revisit and initiate conversations with state representatives to ensure that mandates do not become the new normal. It's not necessary to be part of a formal group to be an advocate – all that's required is the passion, persistence and perseverance to take daily action.

Here are three actions medical freedom advocates can take to make a difference at the state level:

1. Initiate/revisit conversations with your state

legislators on the topic of medical freedom. Elected officials are in office to address constituents' concerns. Call your elected officials to express concerns about mandates. Schedule an appointment to meet and foster a relationship with your representative.

2. Share "good bills" with your local representatives and partner with like-minded legislators to create legislation for your state. Partner across state lines and utilize bill language that's been successful.
3. Create community. You are never alone! Find a local group that shares your values and beliefs. Get involved with grassroots advocacy groups and work together to make change. If you are in Kentucky visit [Kentucky Medical Freedom Coalition](#) for local news, events and bill updates.

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