

For Immediate Release

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Saint Ambrose Academy Celebrates Religious Liberty Victory

Madison, WI – Today, striking down the Public Health Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) Emergency Order #9 on both statutory and constitutional grounds, the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld the right of every person in Wisconsin to the free exercise of religion. In particular, this ruling recognizes the fundamental freedom parents have been given by God to educate their children as they see fit, as provided by the Wisconsin State Constitution.

“We are grateful to God and to the Court for this decision,” said Executive Director Joan Carey, “and to those who fought tirelessly for our freedom, particularly lead attorney Misha Tseytlin, his associate Kevin LeRoy, and the other lawyers on our team. We are gratified that this decision will have lasting ramifications for the State of Wisconsin and will stand as precedent in Wisconsin case law upholding the right of parents to direct the education of their children. It is our legal team who made this possible.”

Attorney Misha Tseytlin added: “I am deeply grateful that the Supreme Court has now definitively held that Dane County acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally in attempting to close our schools last Fall to in-person instruction, including religious instruction. The Wisconsin Constitution gives broad protections to the religious liberty of Wisconsinites, and the Supreme Court now made clear that those protections apply in both good times and challenging times.”

In-person education is a crucial component of the Catholic education we strive to provide at St. Ambrose Academy. Our students learn not just from books but from hourly interaction with living, breathing mentors who, as the Academy’s petition to the Court stated, “live in imitation of Christ and reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior.”

When St. Ambrose Academy students gather to learn, they gather in Christ and with Christ in the Sacraments and through communal prayer. No regulatory body should be able to take this right from them.

Dean of Faculty Constance Nielsen said, “I was confident from the start that our school could put together a plan that would keep our doors open. I was also confident that our students and

families would responsibly follow best practices. I know that not every school was in a position to open this way, but I am grateful to the Court for giving our school and our parents the opportunity to make these decisions for ourselves so that our kids could learn, and pray, and grow together in person. Every day of this school year was a blessing for our community and our students."

Today's victory is the culmination of the work of many. This joint effort began when Dane County officials issued Emergency Order #9 after business hours on Friday, August 21, 2020, as the leadership of St. Ambrose Academy sprang into action. With the grassroots support of over 825 benefactors who donated funds for legal expenses, St. Ambrose hired Misha Tseytlin of Troutman Pepper law firm.

The Thomas More Society later joined the effort as co-counsel, adding additional resources that would ensure that the Academy could stay in the fight until the end. We are grateful to each benefactor and partner who made this victory, one that affects all Dane County schools, possible. The Academy also thanks the seven local Catholic schools and parishes who joined the suit as co-plaintiffs, adding weight to the testimony of the impact this unlawful order had across Dane County.

St. Ambrose Academy is an accredited, private, and affordable Catholic junior high and preparatory senior high school located on Madison's west side. For more information, visit www.ambroseacademy.org.

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