

## Mariya Frost

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**From:** Natalia Corduneanu [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 1, 2022 1:46 PM  
**To:** Mariya Frost  
**Subject:** Fwd: INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

Here is the actual email that disappeared.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

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**From:** Corduneanu, Natalia (ATG)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 28, 2022 11:08 AM  
**Subject:** INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

Dear colleagues:

I'm currently working as a Paralegal 2 in the Consumer Protection Division in a part time status. There is something I'd like to share with all of you so there is no confusion as to what's happening in our agency. This relates to the AGO's decision to separate employees with approved religious exemptions because of AGO's inability to provide reasonable accommodation for these employees. A possible reasonable accommodation, for example, would be to allow these employees to continue teleworking or allowing them to do weekly testing.

Last November, I had received a letter approving my religious exemption request regarding mandatory COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment with AGO. The next step was to engage in the interactive reasonable accommodation process. I informed HR representative that I would be willing to telework, test weekly, limit my interaction with other employees as much as possible, wear a mask, and exercise social distancing. My accommodation was approved while we all were in mandatory telework status.

On March 14, 2022, during my meeting with Deputy AG Todd Bowers, I was informed that my accommodation will be revoked as of April 1 and I will be separated from the agency if I refuse to receive COVID-19 vaccine before the reopening of the office. My teleworking in a part time status was described as undue hardship to the agency. The official letter I received stated that "unvaccinated poses a threat to the health and safety of yourself and others in the workplace." The CDC data cited in the letter is clearly outdated and was not reviewed based on the current state of pandemic. Specifically, the latest data from CDC suggests that vaccination status does not affect the spread of the disease (predominant Omicron variant), so the AGO's claim that unvaccinated employees somehow pose a threat to vaccinated employees doesn't hold any water. If the "level of community transmission in King County is rated 'substantial'" (as cited in the

letter) and the vaccination status is not a factor in preventing the spread of the disease, then the entire agency should either continue teleworking or return to the office without any restrictions.

My appeal to Chief Deputy Esquibel was subsequently denied as well. I have not heard of a single religious accommodation being granted by the AGO at this time. At the same time, accommodations related to medical exemptions have been granted. In my appeal letter, I voiced concern that my religious beliefs were the sole reason for my accommodation being denied. Chief Deputy Esquibel's response was the following: "The AGO has strong antidiscrimination policies and is committed to providing an inclusive and respectful work environment for all." It makes me wonder how this inclusive and respectful work environment for all can be achieved when accommodations are granted to only a particular group of employees. I personally have nothing against people with medical exemptions being accommodated. All I'm saying is that the AGO needs to do a better job in treating everybody equally.

I have made a Public Records Request to obtain a more detailed information about the matters described above.

I was also informed that weekly testing would not be acceptable as well. It makes me wonder why this was not an option when even President Biden's administration was allowing it for federal employees and contractors at the peak of the pandemic, something we no longer experience today.

Lastly, during my meeting with the Deputy AG, I had requested to postpone my termination date until the 1st of July. The reason being, I'm Ukrainian and a number of my family members are fighting for their freedom and risk their lives on a daily basis, to include my father. I explained that I wanted to have an opportunity to provide financial support to them during this difficult time for a few more months. My delay of termination was also denied a few days later. It is hard to explain with words how it made me feel. I did not even want to ask how a three-month long termination delay would inflict undue hardship upon the agency. Regardless of this, I stand strong and with God's help, I will find other ways to support my family.

In my mind, the accommodation denial and delayed separation denial do not line up with at least two core values of the AGO:

- promotion of a collegial, diverse and inclusive workplace that values, respects and supports our employees.
- fostering a culture of belonging that upholds the dignity of every employee in the agency.

In writing this letter to all of you, my intent was to share my personal experiences with you, with a belief that you and the citizens of Washington State deserve to know that such things happen within our agency. Unfortunately, I am not the only one in the agency who had experienced similar treatment. It's hard to believe such decisions related to religious exemption accommodations were made without Attorney General Bob Ferguson's approval.

It was my pleasure working with many of you. God bless!

Respectfully,

Natalia Corduneanu

*“Whenever one person stands up and says, “Wait a minute, this is wrong,” it helps other people to do the same.”*