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**Attorney General Steve Marshall Leads 17 States in Supreme Court Brief Supporting Religious Charity Right to Hire People Who Share Its Faith**

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall led a coalition of 17 states in filing a brief Thursday before the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the religious liberty of Seattle’s Union Gospel Mission. The Mission is seeking Supreme Court review of a recent ruling by the Washington State Supreme Court denying the faith-based charity’s right to hire employees who share its faith.

“The right to the free exercise of religion clearly protects a religious nonprofit’s right to hire people who share the group’s religious faith,” said Attorney General Marshall. “Thus, if a job applicant is not hired because he disagrees with the religious group’s faith, the government cannot punish the church or nonprofit for its faith-based decision. This point has never been controversial, nor contested by a court until now.

“The Washington Supreme Court disregarded history and precedent to deny the right of a religious nonprofit to hire only employees who share its faith. And this decision is merely the latest warning that previously uncontested religious liberties are at risk of being eroded by a growing wave of religious intolerance. The confusion generated by such decisions encourages governments to further intrude on religious liberties. That is why I am urging the Supreme Court to take the Gospel Mission’s case and provide the clarity needed to protect religious organizations from unlawful government intrusions.”

Attorney General Marshall and his attorney general colleagues argue in their brief that the Washington Supreme Court erred in its decision that First Amendment protections extend only to hiring decisions related to ministers and not all employees of religious organizations. History and longstanding decisions from the Supreme Court related to church autonomy all support the proposition that a religious nonprofit’s religion-based employment decisions are protected.

“Most Americans still recognize that ours is a Nation built upon the promise of religious liberty, and that this promise allows religious groups to select their employees based on religion. But confusion sown by decisions like the one at issue here erode that shared understanding and embolden actors in government and beyond to press on further. The Supreme Court, by making explicit what is implicit in its prior rulings, can and should halt that deleterious process. In so doing, the Court will both preserve space for open and searching debate between proponents of rights old and new, and ensure that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths.”



Attorney General Marshall was joined by Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and West Virginia in filing the amicus brief before the U.S. Supreme Court on September 2, 2021.

The Attorneys General amicus brief can be read [here](#).