



St Maximilian Kolbe House
63 Jeddo Road
London
W12 9EE

tel: 020 8749 1321
e-mail: info@catholicunion.org.uk
web: www.catholicunion.org.uk

Nadhim Zahawi MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

Sent by email only.

23 July 2021

Dear Mr Zahawi

I'm writing to you as the Government considers the use of Covid vaccine certification in England.

I understand the Government intends to make certification mandatory for access to certain "crowded" places later this year.

While plans are yet to be confirmed, you will be aware of the unease about moving to such an approach from a number of sections of society. The Catholic Union hopes that proof of vaccination will neither be mandatory nor advised for places of worship.

I understand that the Faiths Minister, Lord Greenhalgh, has said on social media that the Government does not intend to make double vaccination a condition of entry to places of worship. These comments are encouraging, but we have seen over the past 18 months how quickly the situation with the virus can change and how quickly the Government's Covid policies have changed as a result.

I hope you will take this opportunity to put on record that the Government will at no point ask for proof of vaccination to be needed to enter a place of worship – either on account of regulations or through non-statutory guidance.

Throughout the pandemic, faith groups have worked hard to make places of worship safe and secure for people during this difficult time. You may have seen the latest guidance from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, which sets out how Catholic churches will continue this work in light of legal restrictions being lifted in England – including a strong recommendation on the use of face coverings.

Faith groups have also played a crucial role in promoting vaccine take up, helping to provide assurances on their safety and efficacy - with many places of worship being used as vaccination centres.

The situation with the virus remains extremely serious. It's right that we continue to take precautions to keep people safe – especially the most vulnerable in society. However, it's also right that we recognise people's legitimate concerns and don't risk undermining people's ability to practise their faith.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards.

Nigel Parker
Director
The Catholic Union of Great Britain
Email: director@catholicunion.org.uk

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