



NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

February 17, 2021

Ms. Mette Frederiksen
Prime Minister

Ms. Joy Mogensen
Minister for Church Affairs

Dear Excellencies,

We are writing on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), a Christian Worldwide Communion in 126 countries and territories networking 47 million members as well as the European Baptist Federation (EBF), part of the BWA which brings together 61 member bodies throughout Europe and the Middle East. This includes 54 Baptist churches across Denmark with over 5,000 members. Together, with the Baptist Union of Denmark, the BWA and the EBF express our deep concern regarding the suggested legislation on compulsory translation of non-Danish-language sermons into Danish.

While recognizing that all countries face challenges with integration, for more than 400 years, the Baptist family has consistently advanced freedom of religion and conscience as one of our defining core values. Protecting freedom of belief and conscience is most thoroughly secured in countries that maintain robust provisions of freedom of religion. The suggested legislation directly intrudes into this cherished democratic and human rights value and unduly burdens individuals and communities of faith. In addition, the suggested legislation:

- Runs counter to the core convictions of conscience of our Baptist identity currently in practice in 54 local Danish Baptist churches. The first Baptist church in Denmark was founded in Copenhagen in 1839, and for the first ten years Baptists were fined and imprisoned. Baptists played a role in securing religious freedom as part of the Constitution of 1849. For 182 years, Baptist churches have faithfully served in Denmark by providing spiritual nourishment, community service by giving aid to those in need, offering social services such as counseling, and more recently directly working to help refugee and migrant populations successfully integrate into Danish society.
- Sends an exclusionary message to all refugee and migrant groups that will further isolate these groups and, in the end, create greater resistance to integration. This directly jeopardizes 15 of the Baptist churches in Denmark that are comprised of refugees and migrants as well as many more sub-groups found in many of the churches.
- Potentially violates the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), to which Denmark has acceded, and in particular Article 9, Paragraph 2. If the current proposal imposes financial and practical burdens that are not necessary to maintain "public order, health or morals," then there would be a violation of ECHR, which is also part of Danish law. The suggested language might also

run counter to the European Charter of Regional and Minority Language of the Council of Europe which came into force in 2000.

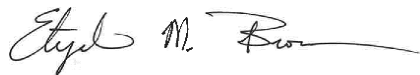
More positively, research consistently highlights – and the experience of Denmark confirms – that countries that maintain robust freedom of religion and belief in the end experience greater financial prosperity, peace, and societal integration.

Though we have focused on the Baptist community in Denmark, our concern is for full freedom of religion and belief for all people of all faiths in Denmark including Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and all others who hold to convictions of faith and conscience. The suggested language in this proposal will have unintended consequences and may lead to the direct persecution of churches and individuals of faith and conscience.

For 172 years, Denmark has constitutionally held to freedom of religion or belief. We urge you to continue to build upon this enviable historic legacy and to reject the suggested legislation on compulsory translation of non-Danish-language sermons into Danish.

We look forward to receiving your reply and will be available to discuss our concerns if needed by hosting a virtual meeting along with church representatives of Denmark, the European Baptist Federation, and the Baptist World Alliance.

Sincerely,



Rev. Elijah M. Brown, PhD
General Secretary and CEO
Baptist World Alliance



Rev. Anthony Peck
General Secretary
European Baptist Federation