Hi, My name is Jemima Correll. I am a registered nurse. I was pregnant in 2021 when the covid vaccines were being rolled out. At a midwife appointment early on in my pregnancy, I was advised that these MRNA vaccines were not recommended during pregnancy. Some time later in my pregnancy at another midwife checkup, I was asked if I wanted the covid vaccine. I asked how was it unsafe just months ago, and now it is safe for pregnant women? How do they have long -term safety data on this new drug? I declined the vaccine.

In my workplace, a busy Emergency Department, I was told I could not work out at triage or be the code nurse, as I was not vaccinated. I found this bizarre, as the areas were all intertwined, and I was looking after the same patients that had been through triage anyway. I went on maternity leave late August 2021, then of course in November the Emergency Directive came out, mandating all SA Health workers be vaccinated to keep their job.

As I hadn't been vaccinated, I received a letter informing me that I was prohibited from entering my workplace and prohibited from practicing as a nurse. Being home with a newborn, I wasn't really worried at that point.

Then in November 2022, the mandate was dropped and SA Health replaced it with their own policy, which had the same requirements, (get vaccinated or you cant work). As I approached the end of my maternity leave (17th September this year, the day my daughter turned█), I hoped and prayed that the policy would be dropped so that I could return to work.

You see during covid, and my time on mat leave, I had really looked into the vaccines, and made the educated decision that the risks far outweighed the benefits for me. Reports of serious adverse health effects after the vaccine, and even death were not worth it for me. Especially when the virus for most people is mild to say the least. Plus it didn't take long for it to become obvious that the vaccine neither prevented the contraction of nor the transmission of the virus.

But sadly that was not to be (the policy getting dropped). On Sep 4th I received a letter from SA Health saying that I was being investigated for misconduct. Then on September 27th I received a letter telling me that my employment had officially been terminated for gross misconduct.

I was sad, angry and frustrated that my job had been taken away from me. It made no sense. The policy has been dropped in other states public health departments… so I could get a public health job in another state, but not my own. Meanwhile my workplace is continually short staffed, asking staff to do overtime, double shifts regularly. I suspect the general publics aren't aware this policy has seen hundreds (thousands nationally) of nurses lose their jobs, as most other sectors dropped their policies long ago.

It's a crying shame; January would be 20 years since I qualified as an RN. All that experience, shunned.

What do I think should be done differently?

- Everyone should have the freedom to make his or her own medical decisions. The freedom to chose what experimental drugs they put into their own body. Pandemic or not, the government should not be coercing people into getting vaccines to keep their job. This is an overreach, and a breach of human rights.

- Sacking people from their jobs has caused immeasurable psychological damage and financial stress. This needs to be taken into account. Loss of identity, complete life crisis, completely unnecessary.

- In the future, vaccine mandates should be avoided at all costs. Let doctors be the ones educating on public health issues, not government officials. Government overreach does far more harm than good.