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The Board of Managers of the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin calls upon our churches as well as other related organizations and partners to support our Baptist siblings and all religious minorities and concerned citizens in the Republic of Georgia. On May 14th, a law was passed by Georgia's Parliament requiring all individuals and organizations in the country who receive more than 20% of their funding from outside of the country to register as "foreign agents." This includes not only businesses but most religious minority groups, including the Evangelical Christian Baptist Church. This law, modeled after laws in Russia, would bring strict government control over businesses, humanitarian organizations, and minority religious groups, including surveillance, intimidation, and outright oppression. All religious organizations except the Georgian Orthodox Church would be targeted by this law. Protestors of the law have been beaten and arrested.

Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili (Metropolitan Bishop of Tbilisi, Georgia) wrote of the protests happening in the country:

> What is happening now in the capital city and in the whole country of Georgia (Sakartvelo) is indeed The Fight for Justice. The best we have today as a country, as a culture, as a society, is the young generation born and raised in freedom and they are fully involved in the building of this justice. Their invincible weapons are Sincerity, Kindness, and Love. We should all take very good care of each of them. That is why it is an even greater injustice to demonize our youth, trying to oppress and discredit them.

Bishop Rusudan Gotsiridze (Bishop of Central Georgia) has requested international support and believes the best support will come in the form of political sanctions.

We call upon our churches as well as partner organizations to raise awareness of the law, and to contact their elected officials about the concerns of citizens in the Republic of Georgia and to support political sanctions against the Georgian government.

We publicly support the citizens of the Republic of Georgia in their quest for democracy. We especially support our Baptist siblings and encourage American Baptists to exercise their civic duties in contacting their US Senators and Representatives to speak on behalf of religious freedom for all.

Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, Executive Minister
On behalf of The Board of Managers
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