



## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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### **Centering In on Free Speech**

**Center Line, Michigan** — March 1, 2018. The federal court for the Eastern District of Michigan entered an agreed order and judgment today, prohibiting the City of Center Line from applying city ordinances to ban Michael Mattia from displaying pro-life signs with Christian messages on public city sidewalks.

Mattia firmly believes that the unborn are created in the image of God, and wants to impress upon the public that abortion violently ends their lives. To show this, Mattia peacefully stands on public sidewalks, without blocking traffic, and displays a sign that contrasts abortion's harm with God's healing.

But, on August 26, 2016, while displaying his sign at a well-travelled intersection in Center Line, Mattia was approached by Center Line police, who asserted that Mattia's expression constituted a breach of the peace because passersby complained about the content of his sign. They warned Mattia he would be arrested if he didn't cease immediately. CRE sent a letter on Mattia's behalf to Center Line officials, asking that they relent on the ban, but instead, they invoked another city ordinance, apprising that it banned Mattia from displaying any sign on any sidewalk anywhere in the city.

Unable to convey his beliefs without risking arrest, Mattia filed suit and requested the court enjoin the ordinances. And, recognizing the patent unconstitutionality of Center Line's scheme, the court obliged. Acknowledging their error, Center Line agreed to this order as well, ensuring that Mattia will be free to peacefully display his sign in Center Line from now on.

"The government cannot ban peaceful sign display outright, nor can it selectively ban signs just because bystanders complain about it," said CRE Chief Counsel Nate Kellum. "We are encouraged that fundamental freedoms will be acknowledged in Center Line."

Center for Religious Expression is a servant-oriented, non-profit 501(c)(3) Christian legal organization dedicated to the glory of God and the religious freedom of His people. For more information, visit <http://www.crelaw.org>.