



Catholic Conference  
of Illinois



## **VOTE NO ON SENATE BILL 1564 FOR GUTTING ILLINOIS' HEALTHCARE RIGHT OF CONSCIENCE ACT**

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The Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) and the Illinois Catholic Health Association (ICHA) oppose Senate Bill 1564. The bill pretends only to amend Illinois' Healthcare Right of Conscience Act, but in reality the bill effectively repeals this important legal protection.

The Illinois Healthcare Right of Conscience Act affirms and protects important constitutional freedoms. Healthcare professionals should not be forced to participate in medical procedures – such as abortion, sterilization or end-of-life care – that violate their values and beliefs. Unfortunately, the authors of Senate Bill 1564 do not agree. As evidence:

- The proposed paragraph (g) to Section 3, defines “material information” in two paragraphs. Paragraph two requires “material information” include referral to “health care facilities, physicians, or health care personnel that can provide the patient the particular form of health care service.” This referral could constitute a direct material cooperation with the objected to service and thus clearly require a violation of conscience.
  - Catholic hospitals do have protocols dealing with conscience exemptions. However, the bill's demand that healthcare professionals only invoke right of conscience if in accordance with written protocols is overly burdensome for healthcare facilities and doctors. It is unrealistic to expect a written protocol for every possible situation that could be presented as problematic to the conscience of a healthcare professional.
- Section 6.1 completely undermines the Healthcare Right of Conscience Act. In addition to the previous requirement of providing “material information,” this section states that a healthcare professional may not invoke their right of conscience unless “the refusal will not impair the patient's health by causing delay of or inability to access the refused health care service.” This restriction on a healthcare professional's right of conscience is so broad and ill-defined there would be practically no situation in which invoking the right to conscience is permissible.
  - What is the “impair the health” standard? This kind of requirement does not apply to any other situation. If a primary care physician thinks a patient may have cancer and refers that patient to an oncologist, it might take weeks to get an appointment. The cancer is growing during that time. Is this delay “impairing” health? Delays often happen in medicine. This provision establishes a new standard of care in medical practice.
- The bill inserts new provisions into the Healthcare Right of Conscience Act that are in direct conflict with multiple existing provisions of the Act, frustrating the law's operation!