

Senator Fred Dyson

**SPONSOR STATEMENT**

**SB 14 - Health Care Provider Protection of Conscience**

The purpose of this bill is to provide for the protection and reasonable accommodation of a health care provider’s expression of professional conscience in the provision of health care services.

Today we are experiencing an unprecedented explosion in science and technology which in turn influences concepts in medical practice. While they have benefited mankind in many areas, these advances pose dilemmas of an ethical and professional nature. The issue of a right to conscience in health care is one of the most pressing public issues of our time.

A health care professional’s view of health, sickness, patient care and purpose of medicine comprise a well-formed professional conscience. This conscience is changed with new information and technology. A broad application of a right of conscience applies to the issues of end of life care, consumer genetic testing, the practice of pain management, psychotropic drug use, sterilizations, race-specific medications, infant circumcision, physician and nurse complicity in capital punishment, physician assisted suicide, abortion, etc.

This bill recognizes the societal benefits that divergent organizational identities bring; the relational dimension of professional conscience between health care institutions and providers, between providers and patients, and between providers and communities; and helps ensure the conditions necessary for the conversations of conscience to continue concerning the health care profession.

Most states have laws protecting the conscience rights of health care providers. Alaska law currently does not provide for a general health care provider protection of conscience.

SB 14 provides a guarantee for the exercise of health care provider conscience in an increasingly pluralistic environment. All health care providers must be treated equally, and must have recourse to the exception made for conscience.

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