

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Resources Committee

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Joint Armed Services Committee

Judiciary Committee

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SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 113

The Right to Try: New Drugs for the Terminally Ill

“Patients should be free to exercise a basic freedom – attempting to preserve one’s own life.”
- Christina Corieri, Health Care Policy Analyst

Senate Bill 113 would create a legal climate in which terminally ill patients who have exhausted other available treatments and do not qualify for clinical trials could gain faster access to safe, but experimental drugs in an effort to save their own lives. By providing certain immunities to prescribing physicians, manufacturers and distributors acting in good faith, this bill would allow terminal patients, in consultation with their doctor, the freedom to try new treatments as they fight to survive, without the burden of waiting for federal approval.

The United States Food and Drug Administration currently offers an “expanded access” or “compassionate use” exemption that allows terminally ill patients that meet certain criteria to access drugs in the clinical trial phase, but not fully approved. However, even with recent efforts by the FDA to streamline the application process, this exemption program is known to be arduous and can take longer than patients facing terminal illness can wait.

Since 2014, at least 44 states have seen “right to try” legislation introduced, 12 of which still have bills pending and 25 of which have signed bills into law with strong, largely unanimous, bipartisan support. It is clear this is a human issue and one that goes beyond state and party lines.

In providing terminal patients the ability to access safe, but experimental drugs in consultation with a doctor they trust, this bill offers new hope when all FDA-approved options have been exhausted. I urge your support of Senate Bill 113.