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Juneau, Alaska

January 30, 2016

Senator Bert Stedman, Chair
Senate Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol, Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: Senate Bill 113 – The Right to Try

Dear Senator Stedman,

This letter is in support of Senate Bill 113, the Right to Try: New Drugs for the Terminally Ill.

For 30 years as a licensed marriage and family therapist, substance abuse counselor and present member of the Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition, I have provided mental health services and support to many individuals who were suffering from life-threatening diseases, as well as their families. Some were referred to Hospice and Home Care. When help and hope seemed unobtainable, several patients turned to suicide.

I have had HIV clients who were eligible to receive medical marijuana, but moved away from long-time friends and relatives because Alaska state law required administering physicians to be publicly identified. Their doctor believed that was professionally unethical and violated privacy laws. Therefore, they refused to provide marijuana as treatment for their illness. Protection of both patient and physician is critical when the patient's well-being, and even life, are at stake.

SB 113 would enable a patient who has provided "informed consent" acknowledging the potential risk of investigational medication to receive treatment of a drug which has successfully completed Phase 1 of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's drug review process. It would provide immunity from disciplinary action and liability of doctors and manufacturers who have been willing to make the investigational medication available to the patient.

This would enable a terminal patient the ability to access safe, but experimental drugs when their doctor has exhausted all the FDA-approved options.

This is a humanitarian issue, not a political one. I urge support of Senate Bill 113.

CC: Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Pete Kelly
Senator Bill Stoltze
Senator Johnny Ellis
Senator Bill Wielechowski