

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Dept. of Administration
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Chairman

REPRESENTATIVE JASON GRENN

SPONSOR STATEMENT

House Bill 43

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

House Bill 43 would allow terminally ill patients who have exhausted other available treatments and do not qualify for clinical trials to 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.

More than 1 million Americans die from a terminal illness every year. Many spend years searching for a potential cure, or struggle in vain to get accepted into a clinical trial. Unfortunately, FDA red tape and government regulations can often restrict access to promising new treatments, and sometimes for those who do get access, it is too late.

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. 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 have to wait.

Since 2014, 33 states have signed “right to try” legislation into law with strong, bi-partisan support. It is clear this is a human issue that goes beyond state and party lines, and could provide Alaskans increased access to potentially life-saving treatments in the times they need it most.

In allowing Alaskans facing terminal illness the ability to access safe, though 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 House Bill 43.