

CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3784

Testimony on
S. B. 939 "An Act Concerning a Patient's Right to Know"
Before the Public Health Committee
March 20, 2017


The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, opposes SB 939 which directly targets Catholic health care institutions in Connecticut. Our state's Catholic health care system serves thousands of Connecticut residents each year and provides high quality health care for a vast variety of illnesses. This quality care is guided by the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care*, which encourages respect and quality service for each patient in line with Catholic teachings. These same directives prohibit the delivery of certain reproductive procedures that are contrary to Catholic teachings, primarily sterilization procedures and the performing of abortions. SB 939 focuses solely on the denial of these procedures and attempts to place an unmerited burden upon Connecticut's Catholic health care institutions for refusing to perform these procedures.

This proposed legislation, under the cover of the broader concept of a "*patient's right to know*," is extremely limited and targeted in its scope due to an underlying religious bias. If the individuals and organizations who are supporting this legislation truly support the concept of a "*patient's right to know*," then this legislation should not target only those services which are denied based on religious beliefs. While it is clear that not every medical service is provided by every health care institution and provider in our state, only those health care providers and institutions that do not provide specific services - due to religious beliefs - would be affected by this legislation.


Connecticut has an extremely high quality and diverse health care system; which includes many secular health care institutions within close proximity to Catholic health care institutions. The ability of a patient to receive the reproductive services he/she desires at a non-Catholic health care institution does not create an undue burden on the patient. Additionally, the reproductive services not allowed by the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic HealthCare* are not services usually required in an emergency room situation.

The burden SB 939 places on Catholic health care institutions is unwarranted. This undue burden includes (1) adoption of written protocols, (2) patient notification requirements, (3) referral and transfer requirements, (4) public posting of a patient's rights, if services are denied on religious grounds, (5) development of written handouts, (6) website listing of services not provided on religious grounds, and (7) various reporting requirements to the state. This legislation also includes a directive that health insurance carriers must provide information to their enrollees when services are not provided by a provider based on religious grounds.

Based on the religious bias of this proposed legislation, and the unjustifiable burden it places upon Catholic health care providers, the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference requests that the Public Health Committee reject SB 939.



Michael C. Culhane
Executive Director



Deacon David Reynolds
Associate Director for Public Policy