



For nearly 40 years, Illinois law allowed doctors and hospitals to **withhold medical information from their patients** on the basis of religious objections.

On January 1, 2017 that changed.

As of January 1, 2017, Illinois patients can finally walk into the doctor's office with the assurance that their health care provider will not conceal medical information relevant to their medical circumstances on the basis of the doctor's or facility's religious beliefs.

While this may seem like a pretty basic protection, Illinois law has actually allowed health care providers—including doctors and hospitals—to withhold care and information from their patients on the basis of religious beliefs for decades. This was permitted by the Illinois Health Care Right of Conscience Act (HCRCA).

The HCRCA was one of the broadest and most harmful health care refusal laws in the country. It shielded health care providers in the state from all liability for refusals to “perform, assist, counsel, suggest, recommend, refer, or participate in any way in any form of medical

practice or health care service” contrary to a personal or institutional religious belief. Aside from a narrow exception for emergency situations, the law included no protections for patients. Now, thanks to Senate Bill 1564, it finally does.

This amendment makes clear that providers will only be excused from liability for religiously based denials of care if they follow protocols to protect patients—including by ensuring that patients receive the information they need to make informed medical decisions and access care. **This is a critical step forward, which should be celebrated by patients and providers throughout the state.**

Thank your legislators for responding to the call to
PUT PATIENTS FIRST

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www.aclu-il.org/putpatientsfirst

