

## **Statement of Jacqueline Halbig, Director, Freedom2Care**

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen and Members of the Press:

On behalf of Freedom2Care and all of our “attending physicians” nurses pharmacists and physician assistants, Senators Hollingsworth, and Runner, welcome to this press conference this morning.

Freedom2Care formed as a group of organizations and individuals who care very deeply about protecting our freedom of conscience. Together we are 45 organizations, 18 of which are professional medical organizations and we reach and represent well over 5 million Americans. We joined together for the purpose of working to uphold the right of conscience for medical professionals and specifically to defend the Conscience Regulation which has enforced these rights.

Joining me today are California’s medical professionals who stand here in solidarity to uphold their fundamental freedom as Americans. They serve both insured and uninsured patients throughout the state. We are also honored to be hearing from Dr. Darilyn Flack, Senator Dennis Hollingsworth, and Senator George Runner.

In addition, although they were not able to be here in person, the Alliance for Catholic Health Care, which represents 54 of the 434 hospitals through out the state, submitted a statement that is included in your press packets.

Why is it necessary to have a regulation protecting conscience? Because today hospitals and medical schools are unaware of the law and have failed to enforce it. The regulation brings both awareness and enforcement of these fundamental rights. Included in your packets are personal stories that show rampant discrimination that occurs today and why we need to uphold this regulation.

In our recent national scientific poll conducted, we discovered that 95 % of medical professionals of faith would rather quit medicine than be in a situation where they are forced to violate their conscience.

In addition, 32 % of faith-based healthcare professionals report having been pressured to refer a patient for a procedure to of faith based healthcare professionals have experienced pressure from or discrimination by faculty or administrators based on their moral ethical or religious beliefs”

20 % of faith based medical students say they are not pursuing a career in Obstetrics or Gynecology, because of the perceived discrimination and coercion in that field.

When you consider the growing physician shortage, nationwide and in California in particular, these statistics illustrate both the rampant discrimination exists and also that there is going to be increasingly fewer physicians to serve.

Nationwide and particularly in California there is growing crisis; a shortage of trained medical professionals. Current projections indicate a 200,000 physician shortage by 2025. According to the Department of Labor there are 800,000 practicing physicians in the US and 250,000 are over the age of 55. The supply of new physicians is not keeping pace with the growing population and aging baby boomer generation.

There are 432 hospitals in the state of California, 69 of which are faith-based; including 54 Catholic, 13 Adventist and 2 others. Every year, they serve approximately 9,381,606 patients, almost 26% of whom are uninsured and over 30% are on Medicare.

Overall, there are less than 100,000 doctors, 230,520 nurses, and other healthcare professionals in the state of California. They serve millions of residents of California - insured, uninsured and those on government-provided healthcare - providing everything from primary care to all types of specialty care.

Medical professionals of faith are the same most likely not only to give of their time and talents serving the underserved and uninsured through voluntary medical and free clinics. Now with an even greater number of uninsured, it seems more important than ever to secure the rights of those who would rather remove themselves from medicine altogether than to violate their deeply held beliefs.

Intro of Dr. Darilyn Falck:

Our first speaker is Dr. Darilyn Falck, an Emergency doctor located in the greater Sacramento area. She not only serves as an Emergency Doctor, she and her husband who is also a doctor, volunteer their time generously in medical missions trips around the world, as well as in various medical positions here at home. Dr. Falck represents the 15,000 member Christian Medical Association-the largest faith based medical professional organization in the US. Dr. Falck, thank you for joining us.

Intro of Senator Hollingsworth:

Our next speaker is Senator Dennis Hollingsworth, whom most of you know as the Minority Leader for the Senate. Senator Hollingsworth represents the 36th District of California, which includes parts of San Diego and Riverside Counties. Senator Hollingsworth's work legislature has earned him the "Legislator of the Year" award from such diverse groups as the California Sexual Assault Investigators Association, the Riverside County Schools Advocacy Association, the League of Off-Road Voters, the California Rifle and Pistol Association, and the California Building Industry Association to name a few. He has been a strong advocate for protecting homeowners and property owners from the threat of wildfires. He is an outspoken advocate for tough laws against child predators; Senator Hollingsworth is the chair of Project KidSafe: a package of legislative proposals intended to protect children from predators and he has spearheaded a number of very successful endeavors to protect and help the citizens of California. And I could continue on...

Please welcome Senator Hollingsworth.

## Intro of Senator Runner:

Next we will hear from Senator George Runner. Senator Runner

Senator George Runner represents Antelope Valley and was elected in 2004 after serving in the Assembly for 6 years. He and his wife Sharon Runner are the authors of California's Jessica's Law and honorary co-chairs of Proposition 83-Jessica's Law which was passed by over 70% of California voters in November 2006. It created some of the toughest and most comprehensive sex offender management and control laws in the nation. He was also the author of the well-known Amber Alert in California, which has resulted in over a hundred successful reunions of parents with their kids.

His priorities have focused on improving economic prosperity, business growth, education excellence, and family preservation for all Californians.

He serves as the Senate Republican Caucus Chair and vice chair of the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality. He is a member of Senate Committee on Banking, Finance and Insurance, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Revenue and Taxation, and Senate Committee on Human Services.

Recently, Runner was named Legislator of the Year by the:

- California State Sheriffs' Association
- Crime Victims United
- California Sexual Assault Investigators Association
- Coalition of Chief Probations Officers
- California Coalition of Directors of Environmental Health
- California Community College Trustees
- California Building Industry Association

## Closing Remarks:

Lastly, although they were unable to join us today, the Alliance for Catholic Healthcare submitted a statement that I would like to draw your attention to. The alliance represents 54 hospitals in the state of California and is as such the greatest faith-based hospital system in the state of California—and is the strongest advocate on behalf of conscience rights for medical professionals that I am aware of.

Freedom2Care has also requested that Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger also stand with us to defend conscience rights as we continue to appeal to President Obama to speak about this issue. You will find copies of those letters in your press packet and you will also find all the information presented here today on our Website at [www.freedom2care.org](http://www.freedom2care.org). Thank you and we will now open up the floor for your questions.