

News Release – April 14th, '08

Senate Bill 8 passed the Senate by unanimous vote, April '08. And in the closing days of the state legislative session, the bill passed the House and is now heading for the Governor's signature.

Senate Bill 8's main sponsor was Sen. Bettye Davis; co-sponsors were Sen. Johnny Ellis and Sen. Kim Elton.

Originally the 1st attempt at passing a bill similar to Sen. Bill 8 was a House Bill sponsored and written by Rep. Les Gara 4 years ago.

Sen. Bill 8 only asks psychiatric facilities to make a good faith effort at providing the patient's choice of gender of staff for intimate care services.

Sen. Bettye Davis has worked in the past at the Alaska Psychiatric Institute as a nurse and social worker and has an intimate knowledge of patient care and challenges.

1. The passage of Sen. Bill 8 will require psychiatric facilities to write and maintain policies concerning a psychiatric patient's right to request the gender of a staff member providing intimate care.
2. The passage of Sen. Bill 8 will require facilities to at least include the psychiatric patient in that conversation of who will provide that patient their intimate care.

Too often, as of now, facilities base their decisions on which gender will provide intimate care on convenience and economics, and it leaves patients open to further trauma.

The percentage of men and woman who have been sexually and/or physically abused, who are in acute care facilities, is between 51% and 98% respectively. (Men a little bit less) Any person who is provided intimate care against their will by the same sex as past abusers is re-traumatized.

Some of the patient rights organizations that have testified and assisted in the passage of this bill:

Disability Law Center, 565-1002---Psychiatric Rights, 274-7686---Alaska Mental Health Board.

Individuals and organizations that have written letters in support or testified:
Dr. Aron Wolf, M.D., MMD.---Ann F. Jennings, PhD. Trauma informed specialist---
NAMI---Alaska Mental Health Consumer Web---Faith Myers and Dorrance Collins,
Mental Health Advocates.

We are encouraging Governor Sarah Palin to sign Sen. Bill 8 into law.

For further information call Faith Myers, Dorrance Collins at 929-0532.

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