

**TESTIMONY OF MISSOURI RIGHT TO LIFE
REGARDING SB 657 - THE PROPOSED CONSCIENCE RIGHTS BILL**

MRL is here to testify today concerning SB 657 which promotes the protection of conscience rights of individuals and religious institutions such that they will not be required to engage in conduct and/or provide support for conduct which they believe to be morally objectionable.

MRL is supportive of this goal to the extent that it allows the individuals and religious institutions to protect and preserve life.

MRL has concerns however that the bill in its original form will also protect those who would withhold life preserving treatment from patients contrary to the patient's wishes. The general conscience of Missourians has always been to protect innocent human lives.

In addition, this bill as originally written could allow abortionists to circumvent Missouri's informed consent laws. A broad conscience law would effectively create an exception to the applicability of laws mandating specified counseling before an abortion whenever the abortion provider asserts that the mandated counseling is, in the provider's view, unethical, and therefore violates the provider's "conscience."

MRL has drafted language which would prevent the use of this bill to circumvent the patient's wishes and state law.

We thank the sponsor for bringing this bill forward. With the recent regulations from the Obama administration and Kathleen Sebelius with Health and Human Service, this is an issue that must be addressed by our lawmakers both in Missouri and Washington, DC.

MRL has approached the sponsor regarding these concerns and hopes that an amendment will address these concerns.