

# **Pritzker Calls Concerns About Changes To Right Of Conscience Act ‘Facebook Fakery’**

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SPRINGFIELD – Another amendment to the proposed change to the Health Care Right of Conscience Act has been filed, but it’s unclear if that’ll subdue the opposition.

The decades-old Health Care Right of Conscience Act in Illinois state statute says no one can be discriminated against in their job for refusing a medical treatment that goes against their conscience. Critics of Gov. J.B. Pritzker's COVID-19 vaccine mandates cite the act when arguing the governor's orders violate the law.

House Amendment 2 to Senate Bill 1169 says someone could be terminated from their job if they don't follow any measure meant to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

During a debate in committee Tuesday, state Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer, R-Jacksonville, and bill sponsor state Rep. Robyn Gabel, D-Evanston, went back and forth.

"My goal here is to save lives," Gabel said.

"And not allow people to make their own health care decisions," Davidsmeyer said. "I understand."

House Amendment 3, filed Wednesday, removes the examples of enforcement. It also removed the immediate effective date.

It's unclear if that changes the historic amount of opposition to the bill, which eclipsed 52,100 witness slips against.

Pritzker Wednesday called some concerns "Facebook fakery."

"It's a very, very narrow adjustment that is focused only on COVID-19 and getting through this pandemic," Pritzker said.

Pritzker said the HCRCA is being "misinterpreted and used in court cases to try to allow people who just don't want to get vaccinated, the anti-vaxxers, the anti-maksters, to avoid the rules."

In an Adams County case in which a judge blocked an employer from firing unvaccinated health care workers, attorney Thomas DeVore acknowledged the state's Influenza Vaccine Law requires the flu vaccine in certain instances. But there's no such thing for the COVID-19 vaccine.

"To the extent the legislature believes that health care workers should be compelled to vaccinate for coronavirus, or testing for coronavirus, they would create a similar type of law to the influenza law, and since they didn't the Health Care Right of Conscience Act would be suggested to cover their ability to still choose when it relates to that vaccine," DeVore said after securing last month's temporary restraining order.

Pritzker was asked Wednesday why not just mirror that.

“Look, I’m going to let the lawyers that are fighting in court about this to make the case,” Pritzker said.

Lawmakers are scheduled in session through Thursday. It’s unclear if the proposed change to the HCRCA will advance to the governor before then.