

LEGISLATIVE COMMENTARY

Bill would force St. Francis to conform to Planned Parenthood's agenda

By Patrick Downes
Hawaii Catholic Herald

Last year, the state legislature passed a bill promoted by Planned Parenthood that would have required St. Francis Healthcare System to provide abortifacient drugs to victims of rape. Thankfully, the governor vetoed it.

This year, the legislature is trying again.

The Diocese of Honolulu and St. Francis asked that a religious exemption be written in the bill. It was a reasonable, understand-

able and necessary request. Catholic hospitals do not perform abortions and do not administer drugs that can work as an abortifacient.

At first, the legislation included the exemption. Then, amazingly, legislative committee members removed the exemption, defending their decision with flaccid arguments seemingly aimed more at stroking Planned Parenthood's ambition to have Catholic hospitals conform to its pro-abortion agenda than providing compassionate health care.

The legislation is insulting to the Catholic Church and St. Francis.

In 1883, Mother Mariamne Cope (who this week was recognized by Pope John Paul II for her heroic work in health care in Hawaii) arrived here with six other religious sisters to take care of Hawaiian's Hansen's disease patients. Five years later, the Hawaiian government asked the sisters to supervise its Bishop Home, a home for girls afflicted with leprosy. They cared for the girls, at the government's request, at the risk of their own lives.

These heroic pioneering women eventually founded what today is called the St. Francis Healthcare System.

St. Francis has been a leader in health care here on the islands for over a century. The hospital has the only heart transplant center in Hawaii. It is the largest single provider in the Pacific of treatment for chronic liver disease. The hospital has the eighth largest bone marrow registry in the nation and the largest registry for Asians and people of the Pacific islands. It provides hospice and home care. It is a leader in cancer care, with state-of-the-art technology in cancer treatment, including non-invasive procedures to remove brain tumors.

St. Francis' excellence in care-giving stems from its respect for the dignity of human life — all human life, from the moment of conception and at every stage until natural death.

In accord with this commitment, the hospital does not participate in abortions or administer drugs that can work as abortifacient, including so-called "emergency contracep-

tion" or "morning-after pills."

However, the Planned Parenthood-promoted bill would force St. Francis to violate this commitment by requiring it to provide abortifacient drugs to victims of rape.

Women who have been sexually assaulted deserve the best of medical care delivered compassionately and sensitively. Currently, the hospital, which does not have a gynecological unit, provides for the transfer of sexual assault victims to the Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children, which has a dedicated sex abuse treatment center.

Because the physical and psychological needs of rape victims are best served by the Kapiolani center, the bill promoted by Planned Parenthood would require St. Francis not only to violate its Catholic beliefs, but to do so even when it is absolutely and entirely pointless and unnecessary.

One gets the impression Planned Parenthood is less concerned with rape victims than it is with forcing a Catholic hospital to conform to its agenda.