

Speaker of the House
State House
Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed House Bill 296 – Catastrophic Health Emergencies – Powers of the Governor and the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene.

This emergency Administration bill authorizes the Governor to proclaim a catastrophic health emergency if the Governor determines that exposure to a “deadly agent” presents an imminent threat of extensive loss of life or serious disability to persons in the State. Under such a proclamation, the Governor may order the Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) or other official, to take certain actions. The bill requires DHMH to create a Catastrophic Health Emergency Disease Surveillance and Response Program and submit a report on any plans, procedures or protocols developed as a result of this bill. The report must be updated every three years or when any provision of this bill is used to detect a catastrophic health emergency to the General Assembly by December 31, 2002.

Senate Bill 234, which was passed by the General Assembly and signed by me, accomplishes the same purpose. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to sign House Bill 296.

Sincerely,
Parris N. Glendening
Governor

House Bill No. 296

AN ACT concerning

Catastrophic Health Emergencies – Powers of the Governor and the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene

FOR the purpose of authorizing the Governor to ~~proclaim~~ issue an order proclaiming the existence of a catastrophic health emergency; specifying the powers of the Governor during a catastrophic health emergency; specifying when a proclamation of a catastrophic health emergency will expire; specifying the contents of an order; requiring the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene to issue a certain directive in a certain manner; providing for the contents of the directive; providing for a hearing to contest the directive; authorizing certain individuals to request a hearing in circuit court under certain circumstances; requiring the circuit court to follow certain procedures under certain circumstances; requiring the Court of Appeals to develop certain emergency rules of procedure; providing for civil and criminal immunity for health care providers under certain circumstances; requiring the State to include health care providers in any application for financial aid under certain circumstances; ~~authorizing the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene to exercise certain duties under certain circumstances in order to maintain an effective disease~~