



The Maryland State Medical Society

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TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan

FROM: J. Steven Wise
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DATE: February 25, 2021

RE: **OPPOSE** – Senate Bill 579 – *Health Care Facilities – Restrooms – Requirements*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), and the Maryland Ambulatory Surgery Association (MASA) **oppose** Senate Bill 579.

Senate Bill 579 requires that every ambulatory surgical facility and every office of a health care practitioner provide a “hands-free disposable towel dispenser and a device that allows an individual to open the door to exit the restroom without touching the door handle” by January 1, 2023. Each of these facilities, as well as hospitals, nursing facilities and others, must report to the Department of Health on the total number of restrooms they maintain and their status as to compliance with the requirement.

The obvious intent of Senate Bill 579 is to limit the spread of infectious diseases by reducing the need to touch common surfaces like paper towel dispensers and door handles. While MedChi and MASA appreciate the intent, they do not believe now is the time to impose another mandate on health care facilities which have spent the last year complying with near-weekly orders from federal, state, and local governments related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Surgery centers have gone from not being allowed to conduct elective surgeries to conducting surgeries but under strict requirements, and physician offices have been busy adjusting their procedures for seeing patients, while also increasing their telehealth abilities so as to reduce the number of patient visits. Surgery centers and offices have also had to comply with the regular cleaning procedures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for the safety of patients and the health care facility workforce, which include wiping down common surfaces, supplying hand sanitizer and so forth. Notably, the CDC has not required the measures called for in Senate Bill 579.

Every effort is being made to comply with governmental directives aimed at reducing transmission of COVID, and perhaps some of the measures implemented for this purpose will become permanent so as to prevent transmission of other infectious diseases as well. But until that decision is made, MedChi and MASA ask the Committee to not adopt these mandates at this time.

For more information call:

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