

Senate Bill 579 *Health Care Facilities -- Restrooms -- Requirements*

February 25, 2021

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Honorable Chair Kelley and Esteemed Senate Finance Committee Members:

COVID-19 has made each of us more cognizant of our hygiene. Frequent hand washing and application of hand sanitizer are now part of our daily routines. Paying attention to the surfaces we touch, rooms we enter, and time we spend with others feels like a habit. Unfortunately, some situations, such as using a public restroom, can be unavoidable. During this global pandemic, entering a public bathroom feels like more of a risk.

Senator Kagan's [SB 579](#) implements a straightforward and minimally expensive fix to a hygienic problem within our health care facilities. By requiring hands-free paper towel dispensers and touchless exit mechanisms in public restrooms, we are in essence removing a prominent mode of disease transmission. COVID-19 persists on surfaces anywhere from a few hours to days, and may even spread to others this way. However, the transmission of COVID-19 isn't our only concern. The average person's hand carries more than 3,000 bacteria from at least 100 species. Constant touching and retouching of different surfaces can and does spread those bacteria and other pathogens.

Frequent sanitization of surfaces is key to reducing the transmission of diseases. We have all had to make many recent changes to adapt to this reality. I attend the University of Delaware, which has implemented many changes to make our campus safer for students. The school added touchless hand sanitizer stations; created contact-free pick-up for food courts in our student centers; and increased the frequency of cleaning campus spaces. SB579 takes this concept of increased disease mitigation to the place where the most illnesses can be transmitted-- frequent touch bathroom surfaces in health care facilities. These places are filled with sick people who have the potential to leave a trail of germs behind them, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. We must act now in order to protect ourselves and those around us.

I urge a favorable report on SB579.

Sincerely,

Melanie Ezrin
Gaithersburg, MD