

Senate Bill No. 325—Discrimination Against Optometrists

AN ACT to add new Section ~~285A~~ 385A to Article 43 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1965 Replacement Volume), title "Health," subtitle "Optometry," to follow immediately after Section ~~285~~ 385 thereof, to prohibit discrimination against optometrists in any State, county or local law and the use of optometrists in any State, county or local agency, department or other function or facility.

May 6, 1966.

Honorable William S. James
President of the Senate
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21404

Dear Mr. President:

In accordance with the provisions of Article 2, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed Senate Bill 325.

I found it necessary to veto Senate Bill 325, which was intended to correct alleged discriminations against optometrists. This action was taken after a special hearing of the proponents and opponents of the enacted legislation. My veto of the Bill is based on the provision which directs all State and local agencies to accept, recognize and honor any "statement, report or service" rendered by an optometrist. This provision in no way states or insures the quality or content of such "statements, reports or services," and I believe this would limit State and local officials as well as agencies in the administration of certain programs since the law would give them no latitude for the exercise of their best judgment.

The Maryland Medical Care Program has sought to provide high quality medical care to its citizens who are eligible for the program. Although I believe patients should have a free choice of the practitioner they wish to go to, the bill is not written to provide this choice and goes far beyond what the individual patient can decide. The fact that officials and agencies are directed to accept the optometrist without the use of any judgment to determine the quality of his work, is in my mind, too restrictive.

In addition, the State Health Department, the agency charged by law with the responsibility of protecting the health of our citizens, in a letter dated April 12th, urged me to veto this Bill.

For the above enumerated reasons, I feel compelled to veto Senate Bill 325.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

(s) J. MILLARD TAWES,

Governor.