

While Senate Bill 796 has the noble goals of ensuring that couples have access to important health-related decisions – compassionate goals that I embrace – the mechanism it uses, the creation a new term of life partner, will open the door to undermine the sanctity of traditional marriage. Rather, a central registry of advance directives and related legal documents, maintained by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and accessible to health care providers with proper identity protections for individuals and couples, I believe, would better address the problems Senate Bill 796 seeks to resolve. I look forward to working with the General Assembly to find a compromise that provides assistance for those in need while respecting the uniqueness of traditional marriage under Maryland law. For the above stated reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill 796.

Very truly yours,
Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

Senate Bill No. 796

AN ACT concerning

Medical Decision Making Act of 2005

FOR the purpose of establishing domestic life partnerships in the State for certain purposes; prohibiting an individual from claiming the benefits of a domestic life partnership except under certain circumstances; establishing certain crimes and penalties; requiring individuals to register with the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene in order to enter into a domestic life partnership; ~~establishing certain qualifications for individuals registering a domestic partnership; establishing certain registration procedures; requiring individuals to register with the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene in order to enter into a life partnership; requiring the Secretary to develop certain forms and make the forms available at certain locations; establishing certain procedures for applying for and obtaining a certificate of life partnership; requiring the Secretary to set certain fees; requiring the Secretary to provide certain information concerning the identity of individuals on the life partnership registry under certain circumstances;~~ requiring the Secretary to adopt certain regulations; providing certain procedures for the termination of a domestic life partnership; requiring a domestic life partner that qualified for and claimed certain third party benefits to provide notice to the third party on the termination of a domestic life partnership; establishing certain rights for certain third parties; requiring the Secretary to keep ~~a certificate of domestic life partnership book~~ records concerning life partnerships containing certain information; requiring certain health care facilities to allow domestic life partners and certain relatives of domestic life partners to visit a domestic life partner except under certain circumstances; requiring two adults to be treated as domestic life partners ~~in~~ under certain circumstances related to medical emergencies; providing for the scope of this Act; ~~requiring a domestic partnership or civil union entered into outside this State to be treated as a domestic partnership in this State; establishing that the registration of a domestic partnership by two individuals~~