

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed House Bill 958.

House Bill 958 has the practical effect of requiring the State to annually include in the budget, beginning with fiscal year 1997, a cost of living adjustment equal to the percentage of the annual increase provided to State employees for community program providers that serve individuals with developmental disabilities, alcohol and drug abuse programs, and for community-based psychiatric rehabilitation programs that serve individuals with psychiatric disabilities. The estimated fiscal impact of this proposal would be approximately \$4.5 million.

While I am extremely sympathetic to the plight of these service providers, I must resist this attempt to preempt the Governor's executive authority over the State budget by mandating this increase in statute. Expenditures of this fund must be considered in the context of other demands for State resources and other fiscal constraints that must be addressed as we attempt to provide tax relief and meet spending affordability limits. In addition to the community organizations that provide services for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, there are other community providers that assist in carrying out the service programs of other State agencies. I am concerned that this bill would address only one faction of the State's network of community program providers. This funding should be properly provided through the budget process and not through an ongoing statutory mandate.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has indicated that providing a cost of living increase for these providers will be a high priority in the preparation of their FY 1997 budget request. I fully support this prioritization, but the amount and timing of additional expenditures must be made in consideration of the budget picture as a whole.

For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 958.

Sincerely,
Parris N. Glendening
Governor

House Bill No. 958

AN ACT concerning

~~Developmental Disabilities~~ **Department of Health and Mental Hygiene – Community Programs – Reimbursement Rates**

FOR the purpose of requiring the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene to adopt regulations to adjust, beginning with Fiscal Year 1997, the reimbursement rates annually for certain services through the Developmental Disabilities Administration, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration, and the Mental Hygiene Administration; specifying that the adjustments shall be made according to certain allocations provided in the State budget for State employees; and generally relating to the reimbursement rates for community programs funded by DHMH.

BY adding to