



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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THE GOVERNOR

July 1, 2021

TO THE HONORABLE SENATE OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Pursuant to Article IV, Section 15 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, I am returning herewith, without my approval, Senate Bill 618, Printer's Number 945.

This legislation is contradictory, misguided and irresponsible. This bill prohibits basic public health measures, which are necessary to curb infectious disease transmission and save lives. Specifically, the bill eliminates the Department of Health's ability to take disease control measures for any future contagious disease, resulting in the inability to contain the spread of infectious diseases in the Commonwealth or long after the current pandemic is over.


While the provisions of this legislation put all commonwealth residents at risk, individuals who are vulnerable to infectious diseases, such as residents of long-term care facilities, are at an even greater risk if the authority to mitigate transmission of infectious diseases is eliminated. In addition, persons of all ages with medical conditions and immunosuppressed systems are put at greater risk under this bill. As we have seen with COVID-19 and other disease outbreaks, public health response measures are critical in saving lives of vulnerable residents. Health orders are needed to provide direction to health care providers, medical facilities, patients, and those likely exposed to a disease during a pandemic.

Alongside Pennsylvania's nation-leading vaccine rollout, universal masking, distancing, and worker safety orders have been instrumental in fighting COVID-19 in Pennsylvania. Short-sighted legislation to tie the hands of people dedicated to public health will only make infectious diseases more difficult to fight.

Finally, this bill limits the Department of Health's ability to collect vaccine and immunization information for the Commonwealth's Statewide Immunization Information System. This would prevent medical providers and the public from having access to vital information on vaccination rates and vaccine efficacy.

For the reasons set forth above, I must withhold my signature from Senate Bill 618, Printer's Number 945.

Sincerely,


TOM WOLF
Governor