

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS  
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
STATE HOUSE . BOSTON 02133

July 7, 1978

TO THE HONORABLE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I have today disapproved certain items in House Bill No. 5710, entitled, "An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Nine, for the Maintenance of the Departments, Boards, Commissions, Institutions and Certain Activities of the Commonwealth, for Interest, Sinking Fund and Serial Bond Requirements and for Certain Permanent Improvements," pursuant to Section 5 of Article LXIII of the Amendments to the Constitution. I intend to act on the remainder of House Bill No. 5710 within the ten-day period allowed me by said Section 5 of Article LXIII.

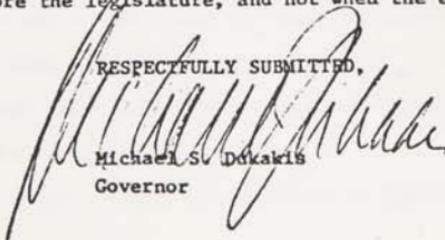
The items I have today disapproved are items 1120-2000, 1120-3000, and 1120-4000, all appropriating funds for group health insurance premiums for state employees and retired employees, and item 4402-5000, appropriating funds for the commonwealth's medical assistance program. I am taking this action solely because each of these items includes a proviso that virtually prohibits the expenditure of public funds for the payment of abortions.

As I have said with regard to five similar budget items during this and the previous legislative session, the issue here is not whether abortions should be legal in the Commonwealth. The U. S. Supreme Court made it clear in 1973 that women have the constitutional right to choose an abortion. Regardless of any of our personal feelings on the subject, that is the law, and it is not going to change in the foreseeable future.

The fundamental question raised by this budget is whether we are going to have two classes of citizens: one with the right to choose an abortion and another that is effectively denied that right. I believe that women who are poor should have the same right to choose a legal medical procedure as do women who are fortunate enough to have a decent income or private health insurance. I also believe that state employees should not be denied health insurance coverage that they now receive, bargained for again, and would receive if they were employed in the private sector.

The time to debate the issue of public funding of abortions is when a bill on that subject is before the legislature, and not when the entire budget is at stake.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

  
Michael S. Dukakis  
Governor

