

HB 579 -- CIVIL DEFENSE

SPONSOR: Dempsey

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill allows for the deployment of any health care professional licensed, registered, or certified in this or any other state who volunteers during an emergency declared by the Governor and grants them immunity from civil damages for providing services. Currently, only workers licensed, registered, or certified in this state are allowed to be deployed.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that agreements between hospitals permit the sharing of staff and equipment, which only works during small-scale disasters. However, if a large-scale event would occur in the state, each facility is faced with similar problems and couldn't help other local facilities. There are unknown insurance risks that emergency workers must face in order to provide care for individuals during a mega-disaster. The bill will give some protections to reluctant healthcare workers to help during these large-scale events.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Dempsey; BJC Healthcare; Missouri Association of Homes for the Aging; Missouri Healthcare Association; Missouri State Council of Firefighters; St. Louis Area Regional Response System; Metropolitan Ambulance Services Trust; Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys; and St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.