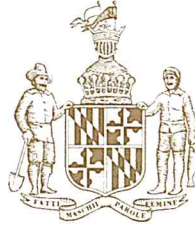


SENATOR DELORES G. KELLEY
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

—
Chair
Finance Committee

—
Executive Nominations Committee
Rules Committee
Legislative Policy Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR DELORES G. KELLEY

**REGARDING SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 0005 - CONGRESSIONAL ACTION -
SURPRISE BILLING - AIR AMBULANCE**

BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

ON FEBRUARY 26, 2020

Dear Mr. Vice Chairman and Members:

The U.S. Congress has preempted the states from regulating air ambulance companies, which are among the most predatory services in the United States.

These services are sometimes lifesaving and are often summoned to transport accident and/or other critically ill patients from accident scenes and/or from small rural hospitals to major critical care hospitals at times when these vulnerable patients are not able to make decisions for themselves, or to consent to any contractual obligation.

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In 2019, the Health Care Cost Institute reported that the average price of an air ambulance trip increased substantially from 2008 to 2017, rising 144% from an average of \$11,414 per trip in 2008 to an average cost of \$27,894 per trip by 2017 (when helicopters were the mode of transportation, and from \$15,684 in 2008 to \$41,674 in 2017 per trip for transport by airplanes).

Critically ill patients in Maryland and throughout the U.S. have often lost their financial health because of balance bills imposed upon them and their families by predatory air ambulance services. Since the federal 1978 Airline Deregulation Act continues to preempt state-level economic regulation of air carriers, including air ambulances, the Maryland General Assembly is unable to protect Maryland consumers, and we are left with no other moral or legal option but to urge the U.S. Congress to pass legislation to prohibit balance billing of vulnerable air ambulance patients suffering medical emergencies. Most of these companies refuse to participate in insurance carrier networks, and it is well past time to stop their predatory practices in Maryland and elsewhere.

I therefore urge your favorable report of Senate Joint Resolution 0005.