



**TESTIMONY FOR HB0565
HEALTH FACILITIES – HOSPITALS – MEDICAL DEBT PROTECTION**

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Charkoudian

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0565 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state. We have over 30,000 members across the state.

Our members have been concerned over the ways that hospitals use their size as leverage to collect from those who are eligible for free or reduced-cost care. This is even more concerning that hospitals would collect interest and penalties on those bills.

Health care bills, and especially hospital bills can drive people into bankruptcy very quickly. It is hard enough for people who have few resources and have to work multiple jobs to make a living to fend off requests to pay from large organizations, even if they are in the right.

It is important for us to protect people from predatory practices and it is also important to understand the size of this problem to see if there is more that we need to do. This bill solves both of those problems. It requires reporting of hospital collections while also requiring hospitals to offer affordable payment plans and prohibiting them from filing lawsuits until payments are 180 days late and giving more notice to patients that a lawsuit is coming.

We should do everything we can to make sure that low-income people are not preyed upon and that they are able to keep their jobs and remain productive in the workforce, without the threat of bankruptcy hanging over their heads.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition supports this bill and we recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.