

Testimony on HB 694
Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement
Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Susan Allen, and I'm a resident of Anne Arundel County. I am writing today—a volunteer for the Maryland Poor Peoples Campaign--in support of House Bill 694-the Medical Bill Reimbursement Act.

HB 694 is a SMALL STEP IN CREATING HEALTH JUSTICE FOR POOR MARYLANDERS.

HB694: Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement will **rectify nonprofit hospitals' systemic overbilling of patients who should have received free healthcare by paying patients back; and hold hospitals accountable to their legal obligation to provide free healthcare to low-income Marylanders.** A recent study by the Health Services Cost Review Commission found that in the years 2017-2018, Maryland's nonprofit hospitals charged patients who should have received free healthcare 60% of the time; totaling an estimated \$60 million per year that was wrongly taken from patients.

Maryland poor and working families have been the victims of shameful billing and debt collection practices of nonprofit hospitals. The Maryland Poor Peoples Campaign has documented the harm our vulnerable families suffer without health insurance, especially when they have medical emergencies.

HB694 will establish a process requiring state agencies and the Comptroller to identify patients who were wrongly charged, and refund those patients the amount that they overpaid. The legislation protects patients' privacy in accord with HIPPA and establishes a process to safely reach out to patients who use an alternate address. HB694 covers patients who were wrongly charged between 2017-2021, and requires progress reports to this committee and the House Health & Government Operations Committee.

I respectfully urge this committee to fight for Maryland's low-income patients by **issuing a favorable report with NO weakening amendments on HB 694.**

Sincerely,

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