

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

To Chair Pendergrass and the House Health & Government Operations Committee:

I am a Baltimore City resident and a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition. I strongly support HB 694 that will require hospitals to do right by the patients they claim to serve and care.

In a shocking report published by the HSCRC last year (a report mandated by HB 1420 from 2020, which came through your committee), we learned that Maryland hospitals systematically stole over \$60Million in 2017 from patients who should have received free healthcare. The hospitals did this again in 2018.

To date, the only consequence of the hospitals' egregious failure to meet their legal obligations to provide free care is the distress placed upon low-income Marylanders by medical bills they should never have received.

HB 694 does not even place a consequence on the hospitals for their violation of Maryland's hospital financial assistance policies; HB 694 simply requires hospitals to return the money they wrongfully stole from low-income families.

The mechanism of HB 694 is simple: It identifies patients through existing data already in the hands of the Office of the Comptroller and DHS, it notifies patients they are eligible to receive their money back, and it gives the hospitals a chance to make things right.

This simple three-step process is the common sense solution to remedy a senseless grievance against low-income Marylanders.

As a member of the HGO Committee, you ought to be proud of the policies you have championed to ensure equitable and reasonable access to healthcare for Marylanders. Now, you have the chance to enforce the laws that you passed by issuing a favorable report on HB 694 with no weakening amendments.

Sincerely,

Valerie Hsu
Baltimore City
District 43