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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 694 – Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement
Health & Government Operations
March 2, 2022
Support

AFSCME supports HB 694. This legislation would establish requirements and prohibitions related to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket costs paid by hospital patients who were eligible for free care, including a requirement that the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC), the Office of the Comptroller, and the Department of Human Services develop a process for identifying and informing patients who qualify for reimbursement and that hospitals reimburse those patients.

For years medical consumers have faced a terrifying prospect: getting needed medical services could very well send them into bankruptcy. The Affordable Care Act was supposed to address this issue but has had only limited success.

The State of Maryland has attempted to address this issue by providing financial support to all hospitals to ensure they provide free and low-cost care to patients who otherwise cannot afford care. Despite this mandate to provide care to low-income patients, Maryland hospitals often still go after former patients for medical debt - many of whom actually qualified for but did not receive free care - to collect on hospital bills under \$5000.

Chapter 770 of the Laws of 2021 sought to curb this sad practice. Looking back, however, the HSCRC discovered in 2017 and 2018 alone that there were charges of \$60 million annually that should not have been assessed to patients. This legislation would create a process for these overcharged patients to be reimbursed for their health care costs.

We ask a favorable reporting of HB 694.

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An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
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