

TESTIMONY ON HB 694

Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement
Position - **FAVORABLE**

To: Chair Pendergrass and House Health & Government Operations Committee

My name is Rován Wernsdorfer, and I am a resident of Baltimore County. I am a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition, and I support House Bill 694.

HB 694 responds to the shocking report that Maryland hospitals collected an estimated \$60 million annually from patients who should have received free medical care in both 2017 and 2018. These numbers were uncovered by the Health Services Cost Review Commission in an analysis produced last year as a requirement of legislation passed by this very committee in 2020.

As a result of working with End Medical Debt Maryland and another group called SURJ, Showing up for Racial Justice, I am aware that hospitals are legally required to offer financial assistance to patients whose income falls below a certain threshold. When Maryland law already provides alternative ways for the cost of lower income patients' health care to be reimbursed to the hospitals when it provides them services, it is unconscionable that these institutions should have unnecessarily placed additional financial burdens upon those whose critical needs they are in business to serve.

This bill puts hard-earned cash back in the pockets of low-income Marylanders who were literally robbed by the hospitals that were supposed to care for them. HB 694 gives hospitals the chance to start making amends for this immoral and illegal behavior.

I respectfully urge this committee to demonstrate its commitment to Maryland patients by **issuing a favorable report with NO weakening amendments on HB 694!**

Sincerely,

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