



END MEDICAL DEBT MARYLAND

Testimony on HB 694

Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement

Position: **FAVORABLE**

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Baltimore, Maryland

For identification purposes only: Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics, Esperanza Center Health Clinic

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

I am a primary care physician and bioethicist and a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition, and I support House Bill 694. For the sake of my patients who have been mistreated by our hospitals, patients who are vulnerable and dealing with food, housing, and general financial insecurity, I ask you to make right this offense against their wellbeing.

HB 694 responds to the shocking report that Maryland hospitals collected an estimated \$60 million 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.

Our hospitals have been doing very well, and my patients have been suffering. Please assist my patients in recovering what is due them, so they can focus on their health and families.

This bill puts hard-earned cash back in the hands of low-income Marylanders who were robbed by the hospitals that were supposed to care for them. HB 694 gives hospitals the chance to start making things right.

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,

Zackary Berger, MD, PhD, FACP
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