



Consumer Credit Counseling Service of MD & DE, Inc.

6315 Hillside Court, Suite B, Columbia MD 21046

P 410 747-2050 F 410-312-7276 E info@cccsmd.org

February 27, 2020

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: House Bill 1081—IN SUPPORT
Health Facilities – Hospitals – Medical Debt Protection**

Dear Delegate Pendergrass,

Although Maryland has strong consumer protection laws to curtail punitive private debt collection practices, they do not adequately address the need for medical debt protection as it pertains to ability to repay and greater affordability options. This is important because the ever-increasing cost of healthcare coupled with stagnant wages at the lower end of the economic spectrum contributes to deepening poverty and widening the racial wealth gap for Marylanders.

Since 1966, Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware, Inc. (CCCSMD) has assisted hundreds of thousands of residents of Maryland improve their financial situation. It is increasingly evident to us that in recent years unpaid medical bills are more common when we consult consumers who seek assistance with managing their debt. Something needs to be done to address this issue.

The solution, as proposed in HB 1081, is to require a hospital to annually submit a report to the Health Services Cost Review Commission on the total number of patients by race or ethnicity, gender, and zip code against whom the hospital has filed an action to collect a debt, or to whom the hospital has and has not reported or classified a bad debt, and the total amount of costs owed but not collected; require that a certain policy provide a mechanism to a patient to modify a payment plan and prohibit the hospital from collecting a certain debt for a certain patient and other provisions that provide all Marylanders ethical and transparent medical debt collection practices.

For the benefit of all residents of Maryland, but especially those who are struggling with ongoing medical expenses, I urge passage of HB 1081 as proposed.

Thank you for your consideration.



Helene D. Raynaud
President/CEO