

HB 1081 Health Facilities - Hospitals - Medical Debt Protection

SUPPORT TESTIMONY

Dr. Zackary Berger, MD, PhD, Johns Hopkins Medicine Physician

2736 N Calvert St

Baltimore, MD 21218

Maryland State Assembly District 43

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

I am a primary care physician in Baltimore affiliated with Johns Hopkins. I am in the Maryland Assembly 43rd District. As a Hopkins physician, I see the effect of aggressive actions against patients in the name of the bottom line. I see these among East Baltimore residents, mostly poor African Americans. One of them, Ms. R, had her paycheck garnished for medical debt she could not afford. She was told by a Johns Hopkins lawyer that the hospital was going to get her to pay what she could. She has no money for medications. I see such actions also among the patients I see at the Esperanza Center, mostly undocumented people from Central America and Mexico. One of them received a bill from Johns Hopkins for over two hundred thousand dollars.

Since I cannot count on my own institution to protect patients, I must count on democracy to do so. This is where you come in. Let us work together to make sure medicine aligns with patient interests, so that these institutes use their tax benefits for the good of the public they are meant to serve.

Zackary Berger, MD, PhD