

Marylanders for Patient Rights

MARYLANDERS FOR PATIENT RIGHTS OPPOSES HB25

February 1, 2021

Chair Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee,
House Office Building, Room 101
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Clippinger,

On behalf of Marylanders for Patient Rights, a patient advocacy organization, I am writing to strongly **OPPOSE HB25**, a bill which threatens to undermine the rights of Maryland hospital patients. The 2019 Patient's Bill of Rights was supported by 24 advocacy groups, passed the MGA unanimously, and was signed into law by the Governor. HB25 threatens to undermine those patient rights by denying patients legal recourse for egregious medical errors, patient dumping, or discrimination against vulnerable patients and minorities.

HB25 greatly expands the number of hospital employees who would receive blanket immunity to civil and criminal liability during a health emergency. Moreover, the immunity would be in effect not only during a health emergency, but also for an additional 180 days *afterwards*, which is totally unjustified. Without civil or criminal liability, there would be no consequences for hospital "employees, agents, or contractors" failing to provide patients with safe, respectful, and informed healthcare during and six months after the end of a crisis.

By removing accountability, HB25 poses risks to hospital patients in increasing medical errors (a leading cause of deaths in the USA), threatening patient safety, and allowing for implicit bias and discrimination. HB25 is ill-conceived and has the potential for grievous harm against vulnerable patients, including those who are elderly or disabled.

Maryland hospitals have remained among the worst (47th out of 50 states) in the USA in hospital patient satisfaction for the past five years, based on surveys by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in the Oct. 2020 Hospital Consumer Assessment of Health Care Providers. This is shameful. HB25 allows hospitals to avoid implementing the patient rights law during and six months after the COVID pandemic and other emergencies, when patients need those rights more than ever.

Please OPPOSE HB25 and protect Maryland hospital patients.

Sincerely,
Anna Palmisano
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Marylanders for Patient Rights
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