

**HB 333 – Hospitals – Financial Assistance**

**Medical Bill Reimbursement Process**

**SUPPORT**

February 24, 2023

To: The Honorable Chair Pena - Melnyk and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Kayla Mock, Political & Legislative Director

United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Dear Chair Pena - Melnyk and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, who have worked the frontlines and have been essential employees in grocery, retail, food distribution, law enforcement, healthcare, and cannabis. Through collective bargaining, our members raise the workplace standards of wages, benefits, safety, and retirement for all workers.

We are also a proud member of the End Medical Debt Maryland coalition.

**We strongly support HB 333** which will implement a process to reimburse hospital patients who were supposed to receive free healthcare but were wrongfully charged by a hospital.

Last year, the legislature passed HB 694 in response to an appalling 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 last year in an analysis produced as a requirement of legislation passed by this committee in 2020.

HB 694 required the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) to convene a workgroup of all stakeholders to decipher the best process for refunding patients while also maintaining patient privacy, and ensuring safe addresses were used for survivors of intimate partner bias. The workgroup met throughout the fall and met a consensus among all parties that patients should be refunded.

This year's bill is a technical bill that implements the best process to refund patients. The bill also provides support to assist affected consumers through the Office of the Attorney General and requires a report on progress to the General Assembly.

HB 333 ultimately puts warranted cash back in the hands of low-income Marylanders who were robbed by the hospitals that were supposed to care for them. This bill 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 on HB 333.**