

Testimony on HB 333
Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement
Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee:

My name is Michael Dalto and I'm a resident of Harford County. I am writing today in support of House Bill 333. I am a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland coalition, and I support HB333 which will implement a process to reimburse hospital patients who were supposed to receive free healthcare but were wrongfully billed by hospitals.

I formerly worked for a state program that provides low-interest loans to Marylanders with disabilities to buy technology to enable them to live more independently. I reviewed hundreds of credit reports for loan applicants. Very many included collections and judgments for hospital debt, and many of the customers with hospital debt had incomes under 200% of the federal poverty level. This means they should have qualified for free care for which hospitals were reimbursed by public dollars. It's outrageous that hospitals would abrogate their obligation to screen patients for financial assistance eligibility and provide financial aid, particularly since the hospitals did not even bear the cost. Maryland hospitals stole \$60 million per year from their poorest patients.

In 2022, the General Assembly passed HB694, which required the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) to convene a workgroup of all stakeholders to figure out 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 there was a consensus among all parties that patients should be refunded.

HB333

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

HB333 ultimately 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. 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 HB333. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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