



February 24, 2023

**PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND**

**TESTIMONY: HB 0333 Hospitals-Financial Assistance-Medical Bill Reimbursement  
FAVORABLE**

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Progressive Maryland, a statewide non-profit advocacy organization, urges you to pass HB033 so that the process for refunding patients who were wrongfully charged by hospitals can finally begin. The legislation implements the process that requires hospitals to refund those patients who were eligible for free healthcare but were nevertheless billed (and sometimes sent to debt collection) by the hospital where they received medical care. Thank you for your attention to this issue and the consequential impact that it is having on Maryland families.

Our members across the state who live in urban, suburban, and rural areas constantly share their fears with us about soaring healthcare costs and the growing burden of medical debt . As you know, the HSCRC's 2020 report shows that in a two year span 60% of people who qualified for free care were billed. **60%**. These billing errors resulted in low income Marylanders being pursued for \$120 million they didn't actually owe to hospitals in our state.

It's time to complete the process, begun last year, to refund the affected patients by passing this bill. Putting policies and enforcement procedures in place that ensure the program will succeed means that Marylanders will be made whole. It's another way in which our state can address racial and gender disparities in healthcare. We know that people of color and women are disproportionately impacted by the problems and shortcomings in our healthcare system.

Thank you for your consideration.

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