

JOHNNY RAY SALLING
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Budget and Taxation Committee

Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment Subcommittee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Finance Committee
Senator Pamela Beidle
Senator Katherine Klausmeier
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
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To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed Members of the Finance Committee:

I express my gratitude for permitting me to address Senate Bill 813 Health Care Facilities – Access to Telephones, also cross-filed as House Bill 1235.

This bill will require all medical care facilities throughout the state to provide a land line free of charge to its patients, so they are able to make outgoing calls and receive incoming calls from outside their respective medical facilities. I believe this bill will offer several benefits for patients.

In critical situations, a landline provides a reliable means of communication during emergencies. Patients can quickly and easily reach out to medical staff, security, or other emergency services, ensuring a prompt response in urgent situations.

A landline in patient rooms facilitates communication between patients and their caregivers or health care providers. It allows patients the privacy to discuss sensitive information, ask questions about their treatment plan, and receive updates on their medical condition. This enhances the overall quality of patient care.

Some patients may have physical disabilities or medical conditions that make it challenging to use mobile phones. A landline with accessible features, such as large buttons or hearing aid compatibility, ensures that communication remains inclusive and accessible to all patients.

Unlike mobile phones, which may have varying signal strengths in different areas of a medical facility, landlines offer consistent connectivity. This reliability is crucial for patients who may need to stay in touch with their loved ones or healthcare providers without the risk of dropped calls or poor reception.

I would like to also have on record that I have submitted an amendment to ensure that having access to a telephone will be free of charge to the patients and their families.

I have submitted another amendment to broaden the bill's scope to encompass all telecommunication devices, including video phones and video remote interpreting, to ensure inclusivity for the deaf, hard of hearing, and blind communities in our state. This amendment will also include yearly training for staff of these facilities to learn how to use these telecommunication devices.

To ensure accessibility for the deaf, hard of hearing, and blind, the bill now requires high-speed bandwidth in all medical facilities for compatibility with various telecommunication devices.

In summary, providing free landlines in patient rooms contributes to better emergency response, improves patient-caregiver communication, ensures accessibility for individuals with disabilities, enhances privacy and confidentiality, and offers consistent connectivity. These factors collectively contribute to an improved overall experience for patients in medical facilities.

I appreciate your time and the opportunity to testify on this matter, and I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 813.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Johnny Ray Salling". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Senator Johnny Ray Salling