



Testimony in Support of HB 328  
Hospitals-Financial Assistance Policies-Revisions

Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 12th, 2024

Dear Honorable Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee,

Progressive Maryland is a statewide non-profit grassroots organization with 20,000 individual members and supporters, 4 local chapters, and 21 affiliated labor, civil rights, health and environmental groups located across the state. On behalf of our grassroots constituents, we welcome the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 328.

Our organization is eager to see the Committee focus on this timely measure. We know from talking to everyday Marylanders that medical debt is taking a real toll on many of them. Black and brown families deal with this health and financial equity issue in greater numbers. That's why HB328 is a priority for our organization. We need to do all that we can to address these ongoing racial disparities and this legislation will do that.

Hospitals use taxpayer dollars for financial assistance programs. We should have a voice in whether or not those funds can or cannot be accessed to otherwise income eligible people by setting an asset test or a service area test. It's common sense that if someone ends up needing an emergency room that's 100 miles from home, they should not delay getting care, nor should they worry about being subject to a geographic test to get the financial assistance for which they are eligible. This legislation addresses that all too common occurrence (given the number of hospitals currently using such a geographic test.)

Governor Moore has committed to ensuring that our great state leaves no one behind. Our members share that value and we know that the members of this Committee do, too. At a time when our healthcare system and our economy ARE leaving too many working class and low wealth people behind, this bill, along with other reforms to reduce high cost health care costs, can be game-changing for thousands of people who aren't being given the relief and assistance they need.

Specifically, eliminating these tests for income eligible patients will make it easier for hospitals with high charity care denial rates to improve their record and approve **more**

applications resulting in better health outcomes. Additionally it means “charity care” funds won’t be left on the table. We think it’s pretty simple: no funds left on the table means fewer people who qualify for those funds based on their income will be left behind. It’s also urgent so please don’t delay, pass the bill this session.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. We urge you to vote yes on this bill and support your House colleagues to do the same.