

Hospitals - Financial Assistance Policies - Revisions / HB 328  
Official Testimony  
Position: **FAVORABLE**

House Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 12, 2024

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

My name is Michael Walsh. I'm a resident of Shady Side, a two-time cancer survivor, and a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition. I am writing today in support of HB 328.

HB 328 prohibits hospitals from using asset tests or service area tests to deny patients free or low-cost care that they would otherwise qualify for due to their income. It will make financial assistance more fair, expand it to more people, which will help reduce medical debt, and create more clarity and consistency in our hospital financial assistance policies to help patients.

As a two-time cancer survivor I know all too well the burden of seeing the price to save my life. So you can imagine how heartbroken I was to learn that there are others in Maryland that are seeing bills not unlike my own but never should have because they legally qualify for free medical care, and it's important to ensure that nothing further impedes a person's ability to receive critical medical care free or at a reduced-cost, so things like assets that are critical to a person's well-being or where they live versus where they receive care. As you know, all Maryland hospitals are nonprofit and are required to provide free and reduced cost care as a condition of their tax-exempt status. Maryland also has a global-budgeting policy that sets rates and provides hospitals with funds for charity care each year based on last year's expenses. So if the hospitals have taxpayer support, why are they denying people care? It's not right, and the practice needs to end.

I hope you will support this critical legislation and urge your colleagues in the House to do the same. I respectfully urge this committee to fight for all of Maryland's people by issuing a favorable report with NO weakening amendments on HB 328.

Sincerely,

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