

HIGH NOTE CONSULTING

Testimony to the House Health & Government Operations Committee
HB1336 Hospitals – Financial Assistance – Medical Bill Reimbursement
Position: Favorable

February 26, 2025

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Health & Government Operations Committee
Room 241, HOB
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Health & Government Operations Committee

Honorable Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

High Note Consulting, LLC helps Marylanders with disabilities and their families navigate the public benefit system when they secure employment to ensure they keep essential benefits and get ahead financially through work. Many of our clients have medical debt, often resulting in collection and judgments, that they can ill afford.

We strongly support HB1336 which provides a process to repay patients who were wrongly pursued for debt by Maryland's nonprofit hospitals when they qualified for free care.

Why HB1336 is needed:

Hospitals Have a Legal obligation to provide free healthcare. Maryland hospitals must provide free care to low-income patients under federal and state law. The report shows they failed to meet this obligation & failed to make patients aware of financial assistance which is why MDGA passed legislation SB 875/HB 1420 in 2020 to increase awareness of this assistance.

Providing Refunds to Patients is an Economic Justice Issue. The cost of gas, food, and housing is increasing and outstripping minimum wage increases. The patients who qualify for

free care live paycheck to paycheck. Providing them with a refund for overpayment will increase their economic security.

Providing Refunds is a Racial Justice Issue. 27.9 % of Black households have medical debt, compared to 17. 2% of white households nationwide. 50% of Black households were unaware of hospital financial assistance compared to 29% of white households. Providing refunds addresses some of the social disparities in health care access and provision.

Hospitals Must Be Held Accountable. Hospitals sent 60% of patients who should have received free care to debt collection. A portion of these financially fragile households paid hospitals \$60 million per year on top of the payment the hospitals already received from the state. This legislation holds hospitals accountable for their lax oversight.

For all these reasons, we support HB1336 and urge a favorable report.

Michael Dalto, President
High Note Consulting, LLC