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Date: March 5, 2020  
Committee: Finance Committee  
Legislation: Testimony on SB 774: *Hospitals- Community Benefits*  
Position: Favorable with Amendments

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Dear Senator Kelley and Members of the Committee,

1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East SUPPORTS SB 774 – Hospitals – Community Benefits- and requests a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report by this committee. This bill would bring much-needed transparency to the hospital community benefits reporting process. It would also improve accountability in hospital community benefits spending, giving stakeholders a stronger voice to advocate for spending that directly improves the health of their communities.

My name is Claudia Balog and I am a Lead Researcher with 1199. We represent 10,000 healthcare workers throughout Maryland and DC across the delivery spectrum – hospitals, nursing homes and clinics. 1199 approaches this conversation wearing two hats: as caregivers and as community members directly impacted by the spending decisions made by hospitals.

Our research team conducted a review of every single hospital community benefits filing with the HSCRC for Fiscal Year 2018, both the financial reports and narrative reports that are required of hospitals.

We found that the financial reports did not provide the kind of framing and context necessary for the public to understand how Community Benefit dollars were being allocated. When we dove into the narrative reports, we found a great deal of variation in how hospitals dedicated resources to the kinds of community health initiatives that would most greatly serve the most vulnerable communities.

We are grateful to Senator Kelley for bringing us together with the other stakeholders – the Maryland Hospital Association, the Maryland Department of Health, The Health Services Cost Review Commission, and the local health officers – to hammer out a compromise. While the bill with the amendments is not everything we sought, we believe it will go a long way toward improving the community benefit reporting, adding uniformity to the reporting, and aligning the reports with the Community Health Needs Assessments.

Our members live in communities facing unique public health crises. Some regions of our state need targeted community benefit spending to address the opioid crisis. Many of our members live in neighborhoods with high rates of childhood asthma and lead poisoning. Others live in counties where public health officials are battling chronic diseases such as diabetes.

Our state has an opportunity to shine a light on how community benefit dollars are spent – however, we also have an opportunity to ensure that hospital community benefit dollars are being used in ways that

directly improve public health outcomes. The communities in Maryland which face grave healthcare inequities deserve to have their voices heard.

We strongly encourage this committee to vote favorably with the agreed upon amendments on HB 1169.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Balog

Lead Researcher

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East