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Date: March 5, 2020

Committee: Finance Committee

Legislation: Testimony on SB 774: Hospitals- Community Benefits Bill

Position: Support

Dear Senator Kelley and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

SEIU 32BJ SUPPORTS SB 774 and requests a FAVORABLE report by this committee. This bill would create a working group that sets minimum community benefits spending for each hospital, mandate meaningful public engagement in identifying community health needs and require hospitals to clearly report their community benefit expenditures, tax exempt disclosures, and other financial measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today on behalf of SEIU 32BJ's 20,000 members in Maryland and the D.C. Metropolitan Area. Our members are the janitors and security offices who clean office buildings and government buildings, and make sure our airports are operating smoothly in a variety of service positions. While our members struggle to get by on low wages and benefits, Maryland's nonprofit hospitals get millions of dollars in tax breaks—known as “community benefits” spending—which they are required to spend on programs that make our communities healthier.

However, since these investments are poorly defined and regulated, not all hospitals are forced take this commitment to the community as seriously as others. We deserve to see the complete picture of the impact hospitals have on the communities they serve. We need legislation that will reinforce Maryland's community benefits program and ensure hospitals are held accountable.

We strongly encourage this committee to vote favorably on SB 774.

Respectfully submitted,

Testimony of Jaime Contreras, Vice President and Director, Capital Area District, 32BJ SEIU