

SB875- The Financial Assistance Policies and Bill Collections Act

SUPPORT TESTIMONY

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Verdell Clark. I am a cancer survivor. I am victim of Hopkins. I was sued by them a little over ten years ago. I also worked there as a case manager. I had very high hospital bills but I was unable to work because of the treatments that I was going through.

I was getting a lot of bills from Hopkins, but not only that, I was getting calls from the financial department stating that I should make a payment and if I didn't then they would send it to collections. At that point, I wasn't as concerned with the bill because I was sick and I knew I couldn't pay for the bills.

After I started back to work and going to some of my doctor appointments, I remember I had to do an x-ray. I went down to the basement where I was refused an x-ray until I went to the financial department. They stated: "You have a large bill and until you pay on this bill, we cannot do the x-ray." I had to go back home and pay on a bill in order to get x-rayed for a problem I was having. This not only happened once, it happened more than once. Every time I had a doctor appointment, I had to go to the finance department because I had an outstanding debt and I had to pay on these outstanding debts before I was able to see a doctor or provider.

I was sued and I was asked to go to court. Once I got there, I was arrested because I showed up at the wrong court—I was arrested and I was handcuffed and I was taken to a cold basement and had to sit through an entire trial until the judge was able to see me. Once I was in front of the judge, he did dismiss the case. But that is not the point. The point is that I was arrested for a hospital bill that I was unable to pay. Not only that, it was a very traumatic experience for me. It was also bad for my credit, which made it very difficult for me once I started working again, even to get a checking account because of the bad mark on my credit.

I was able to get through it. There are other people who are not able to get through it. I was able to get back on my feet and started to get back to work and started paying for bills.

That's my story. And I'm hoping that this story will help others.