

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

### HB 849 Public Health - Medical Records - Fees

March 24, 2021

Senate Finance Committee

My name is Caroline Bolas. I have been supporting individuals living with severe mental illness and who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness to access SSI/SSDI benefits for over 10 years. During this time, I have seen just how important obtaining these benefits are in terms of increasing well-being, accessing housing, obtaining healthcare, and providing much needed stability. However, I have also seen that for many of those we serve, being asked to pay for medical records presents an insurmountable barrier when applying for public benefits. For those who have no income and are unable to gain/maintain employment due to their impairments, being charged for medical records, even when it might seem a relatively small amount, can cause additional stress and dissuade individuals from continuing with their much needed application. This situation is compounded by the fact that often individuals who have experienced homelessness have to obtain medical records from multiple sources.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of House Bill 849. HB 849 would help ensure better equity in enabling low income Marylanders to access the records they need to secure life changing public benefits. For this reason, I support HB 849 and urge a favorable report.

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