

Medical Debt Protection Act / HB565
Official Testimony
Position: **FAVORABLE**

To the House Health & Government Operations Committee

My name is Katharina Grosman, and I'm a Baltimore resident. I strongly support the Medical Debt Protection Act (HB565/SB514) and urge you to do the same on behalf of all Marylanders facing immoral lawsuits during a time of need.

This bill is of utmost importance, especially during a global health pandemic. HB565 will protect low and middle-income households from punitive medical debt lawsuits. It will prohibit medical debt lawsuits for \$1000 or under, require income-based repayment plans, and prevent wage garnishments and liens on homes over medical debt. I believe that passing of this bill is essential because it reduces the harm inflicted on families who are struggling financially. These families are already going through enough as is, facing a medical debt lawsuit should be the last of anyone's worry when they are ill or recovering from illness.

Currently, it is permitted to garnish 50% of wages of someone owing medical debt. Wages were withheld from almost 9,000 families in Baltimore City alone between the years of 2009 and 2018. The reality is that if half of my wages were garnished, I would no longer be able to afford rent. This is true for many residents in Maryland, and especially true for the hundreds of thousands of Marylanders working for minimum wage or close to it. This punitive practice only further perpetuates the problems plaguing our communities. With mounting medical debt and garnished wages because of it, families are essentially evicted and forced to find another living situation. This could lead to being houseless, and put families in unstable and potentially dangerous situations. HB565 would greatly reduce this harmful, immoral practice.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on the HB565/SB514, the Medical Debt Protection Act. It is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Katharina Grosman
District 40