

**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
HB 849 - Public Health - Medical Records - Fees**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 2, 2021**



Health Care for the Homeless strongly supports HB 849, which would adjust the maximum fee that can be charged for a copy of a medical record and repeal the ability of a health care provider to charge a separate preparation fee.

For nearly 40 years Health Care for the Homeless has supported thousands of adults and families experiencing homelessness in the Baltimore metropolitan area. As part of our full, integrated medical and behavioral health care, we have a team of staff assisting clients with their applications for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Through our [SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery \(SOAR\) program](#), our Disability Assistance Outreach Specialists assist between 100 and 200 clients every year. Our clients are among the most vulnerable, those experiencing homelessness or living in unstable housing. For our clients, and particularly those experiencing substance use disorder, SSI/SSDI benefits not only support their economic health but their physical and mental health as well.

Our SOAR Coordinator, along with a statewide group of SOAR and disability advocates identified the charging of medical records fees as a barrier for clients accessing their benefits across the state. Health Care for the Homeless never charges for medical records as part of our clients' SSI/SSDI applications. However, it came to our attention that other providers do not offer the same service free of charge to SSI/SSDI applicants. These fees can be prohibitively costly, as medical records in order to make an SSI/SSDI claim can be dozens, sometimes hundreds, of pages. Particularly with individuals in need of SSI/SSDI benefits, the fees for medical records necessary to make the appropriate case to Social Security can be the difference between whether an individual can afford to complete their SSI/SSDI application. To be clear, extensive medical records are necessary as part of an individual's application for SSI/SSDI.¹

¹ Social Security Administration (SSA) must obtain all necessary information and evidence to determine an individual's eligibility and payment amount. See Social Security Act, § 1631; 20 CFR § 416.200 and 203.

By eliminating fees for medical records for people applying for public benefits, HB 849 will ensure that low-income Marylanders can access the medical records they need in order to obtain critical public benefits. For the aforementioned reasons, Health Care for the Homeless strongly urges a favorable report on this bill.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

We work to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement.

We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City, and in Harford, and Baltimore Counties.

For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.