

Testimony in Support of HB 694

Hospitals – Financial Assistance – Medical Bill Reimbursement

TO: Hon. Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Kayla Mock, Political Organizer

United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Chair Kelley and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I appreciate the chance to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, working on the front lines of the ongoing pandemic in grocery, retail, food distribution, law enforcement, and healthcare. Through collective bargaining, our members raise the workplace standards of wages, benefits, safety, and retirement for all workers.

We strong support HB 694 and urge this committee to vote it favorably, with no weakening amendments.

HB 694 will **rectify nonprofit hospitals' systemic overbilling of patients who should have received free healthcare by paying patients back; and hold hospitals accountable to their legal obligation to provide free healthcare to low-income Marylanders.** A recent study by the Health Services Cost Review Commission found that in the years 2017-2018, Maryland's nonprofit hospitals charged patients who should have received free healthcare 60% of the time; totaling an estimated \$60 million per year that was wrongly taken from patients.

HB694 will establish a process requiring state agencies and the Comptroller to identify patients who were wrongly charged and refund those patients the amount that they overpaid. The

legislation protects patients' privacy in accord with HIPPA and establishes a process to safely reach out to patients who use an alternate address. HB694 covers patients who were wrongly charged between 2017-2021 and requires progress reports to this committee and the House Health & Government Operations Committee.

This bill puts hard-earned cash back in the hands of low-income Marylanders who were robbed by the hospitals that were supposed to care for them. HB 694 gives hospitals the chance to start making things right.

I respectfully urge this committee to demonstrate its commitment to Maryland patients by **issuing a favorable report with NO weakening amendments on HB 694.**