

Testimony on HB 694
Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement
Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Michael Walsh, and I'm a resident of Anne Arundel County. I am writing today in support of House Bill 694-the Medical Bill Reimbursement Act.

HB694: Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement 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.

As a two-time cancer survivor I know all too well the burden of seeing the price to save my life. So you can imagine how heartbroken I was to learn that there are others in Maryland that are seeing bills not unlike my own but never should have because they legally qualify for free medical care. I can't understand why hospitals would be stealing from my fellow Marylanders! You cannot say that hospitals are acting in the best interest of their patients if they turn around and bill someone that shouldn't be, it's just not right.

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.

I respectfully urge this committee to fight for Maryland's low-income patients by **issuing a favorable report with NO weakening amendments on HB 694.**

Sincerely,

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