



END MEDICAL DEBT MARYLAND

Testimony on HB 694

Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement

Position: **FAVORABLE**

To Chair Pendergrass and the House Health & Government Operations Committee:

My name is Jessica Klaitman, and I'm a resident of Baltimore County. I am a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition, and I support House Bill 694. I am writing on behalf of Baltimore Women United, a diverse group that educates women on important issues, engages them as voters, constituents, candidates and donors, to further women's equality in Baltimore and throughout Maryland. I am also a social worker with over 20 years of experience.

HB 694 responds to the shocking report that Maryland hospitals collected an estimated \$60 million from patients who *should have received free medical care* in both 2017 and 2018. These numbers were uncovered by the Health Services Cost Review Commission in an analysis produced last year as a requirement of legislation passed by this very committee in 2020.

Hospitals have a fund of taxpayer money that they can draw upon for people in dire need who cannot afford medical care. Hospitals do not have to sue patients, yet they have done so, to the great detriment of Maryland families. In doing so, hospitals have harmed the people they are meant to help. This bill repairs some of the harm done to our most vulnerable community members. It presents an exciting and rare opportunity to right wrongs, and concretely help people who have been hurt.

HB 694 puts hard-earned cash back in the hands of low-income Marylanders who were treated unjustly 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.**

Sincerely,

Jessica Klaitman
Baltimore Women United
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