



HB 694 - Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement
House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 02, 2022
SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 694. This bill will require the Maryland Office of the Comptroller, the Department of Human Services, and the Health Services Cost Review Commission to identify and notify low-income hospital patients who should have received free care that they are entitled to reimbursement from their hospital for overpayment of medical expenses.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

CASH is a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition, and we support House Bill 694.

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.

Because our clients are low-moderate income individuals and families, many of them cannot afford insurance and have to pay out of pocket for any medical procedure or visit. As you can imagine, these charges add up quickly. No one should have to go without any type of medical prevention or intervention because our society puts money above human beings. On top of already being low on funds, hospitals are taking unnecessary funds from individuals and families who do not have any to spare. **This bill puts hard-earned cash back in the pockets of low-income Marylanders who were ripped off by the hospitals that were supposed to care for them. HB 694 gives hospitals the chance to start making things right.**

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

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope