

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 Suzanne Doogan and I'm a resident of Baltimore City. I am a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition, and I 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.

I am an educator and have worked for nine years with youth in Baltimore City. Many of the youth that I have worked with and built relationships with are low-income. *Hospitals are legally obligated to offer financial assistance to patients whose income falls under a certain threshold. Many of these patients are the families that I know and love, from having worked with their children.* I'm outraged that there has been \$60 million per year stolen from these families. This money could have gone towards meals, towards paper and art supplies for schools, towards fun, towards games, towards further security, but instead it was stolen. *Hospitals are legally obligated to offer financial assistance to patients whose income falls under a certain threshold. They are violating their commitment and stealing from members of our communities who don't have funds to spare.*

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.**

Sincerely,

Suzanne Doogan

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