



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 Malcolm Bates, and I submit this testimony on behalf of Progressive Maryland. Progressive Maryland is a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization promoting racial, social, economic, and environmental justice. With over 120,000 individual members, supporters, and organizational affiliates statewide, we are leading the fight for progressive change in Maryland through grassroots organizing, public education, and legislative advocacy. We are also a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland Coalition, and I write this in 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.

We joined as a member of the End Medical Debt coalition because medical debt (and almost all problems in our healthcare system) disproportionately affect working-class Marylanders and Marylanders of color. The general assembly exists to work for the popular will of the people of Maryland. This body has a responsibility to take swift action on this bill, to fight for and protect Marylanders from the motives of our for-profit healthcare system, even if the problems are inadvertent and especially if the problems are systemic.

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,

Malcolm Bates

Lead Healthcare Organizer, Progressive Maryland
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