

## **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 Michael Dalto, 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 formerly worked for a state program that provides low-interest loans to Marylanders with disabilities to buy technology to enable them to live more independently. I reviewed hundreds of credit reports for loan applicants. Very many included collections and judgments for hospital debt, and many of the customers with hospital debt had incomes under 200% of the federal poverty level. This means they should have qualified for free care for which hospitals were reimbursed by public dollars. It's outrageous that hospitals would abrogate their obligation to screen patients for financial assistance eligibility and provide financial aid, particularly since the hospitals did not even bear the cost. Maryland hospitals stole \$60 million per year from their poorest patients. The General Assembly must ensure these patients are reimbursed and that hospitals never again exploit people they are supposedly committed to healing. HB 694 will make patients whole.

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,

Michael Dalto  
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