



END MEDICAL DEBT MARYLAND

Testimony on SB404/HB333

Hospitals - Financial Assistance - Medical Bill Reimbursement

Position: FAVORABLE

To Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee;
To Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations
Committee:

I am Zackary Berger, a resident of Maryland District 43A and a primary care physician. I am a member of the End Medical Debt Maryland coalition, and I support SB404/HB333 which will implement a process to reimburse hospital patients who were supposed to receive free healthcare but were wrongfully billed by a hospital.

I treat underinsured and uninsured Baltimoreans and Marylanders. I am often distressed and outraged how hospitals steal money from my patients, actively undermining their health and by extension the wellbeing of their families, neighborhoods, cities and state. This must stop, and this bill will help.

Background

Last year, the legislature passed HB694 in response to a 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 committee in 2020.

HB694 required the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) to convene a workgroup of all stakeholders to figure out the best process for refunding patients while also maintaining patient privacy and ensuring safe-addresses were used for survivors of intimate partner violence. The workgroup met throughout the fall and there was a consensus among all parties that patients should be refunded.

SB404/HB333

This year's bill is a technical bill that implements the best process to refund patients. The bill simply also provides support to assist affected consumers through the Office of the Attorney General and requires a report on progress to the General Assembly.

SB404/HB333 ultimately 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. This bill 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 on SB404/HB333. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Zackary Berger MD PhD
Maryland District 43A
Member of Jews United for Justice and Baltimore DSA