



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SB0404: Hospitals- Financial Assistance- Medical Bill Reimbursement Process

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: February 23, 2023

The League of Women Voters Maryland supports **Senate Bill 0404: Hospitals- Financial Assistance- Medical Bill Reimbursement**, which would reimburse patients eligible for free care at Maryland hospitals between 2017 and 2021, but who had mistakenly been billed, and had paid those bills.

The League of Women Voters Maryland believes that health care is a human right, and that every Maryland resident should have access to affordable, equitable, quality health care that also protects patients' rights.

Each Maryland hospital is mandated to develop and implement a financial assistance policy to provide free or reduced cost care to low-income individuals who either lack health insurance or whose coverage is inadequate to cover hospital charges. It is also mandated that if charges are erroneously billed and collected from a patient eligible for free or reduced cost care, that those charges must be reimbursed by the hospital.

In 2021, a shocking report from the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission found that Maryland Hospitals in 2017 and 2018 had incorrectly billed and collected \$60 million dollars per year from patients eligible for free care. Legislation was then quickly passed in 2022 (CH0683), creating a task force to design a refund process.

Passage of Senate Bill 404 would implement the recommendations of that task force. Patients who had been billed erroneously would be identified through the combined efforts of the hospitals, the Comptroller's office, and the Department of Human Services, and would be notified of their eligibility for a refund. **Maryland hospitals would then provide the reimbursement.**

Refunding these patients is a matter of fairness, and is a matter of patient and consumer rights. The League and its 1,500+ members urge the committee to give a favorable report to Senate Bill 404.