



Testimony on SB404/HB333
Hospitals – Financial Assistance – Medical Bill Reimbursement Process
Position: **Favorable**

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Maryland/DC. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the United States, representing over 10,000 members who work in hospitals and Long-Term Care facilities across our region. 1199SEIU is also a founding coalition member of End Medical Debt Maryland. Our union supports SB404/HB333 and recommends the Committee issue a favorable report on the bill as amended.

Last year, this committee passed HB694/CH683 in response to a report by the Health Services Cost Review Commission that was released during the 2021 legislative session, which used a statistical analysis to uncover that Maryland hospitals collected approximately \$60 million per year from patients who should have received free medical care in 2017 and 2018. HB694/CH683 formed a workgroup led by the Health Services Cost Review Commission that met throughout the fall to determine the best way to refund patients in accordance with HIPPA and to address other privacy concerns. A representative from 1199SEIU was part of the workgroup. We are pleased that there was consensus in the workgroup that patients eligible for free care should be refunded. This year's bill, SB404/HB333, simply implements the process that was hashed out in the HSCRC workgroup. Currently the bill states that if hospitals do not reach a 10% threshold of refunds, they will not need to continue issuing them.

The bill contains a threshold that hospitals must meet to require them to continue issuing refunds to patients. 1199SEIU supports the bill as amended to lower the threshold from 10% to 5%, and to include an enforcement mechanism that will ensure hospitals meet the 5% threshold for refunding patients. Due to consensus in the HSCRC workgroup about the need to refund patients, we believe the hospitals are acting in good faith to issue refunds. However, we also believe it is a good idea to have enforcement in the bill to ensure the hospitals are further incentivized to meet the threshold. When passed, SB404/HB333 will put hard-earned cash back in the hands of low-income Marylanders. 1199SEIU respectfully urges this committee to demonstrate its commitment to Maryland patients by issuing a favorable report on SB404/HB333.

In Unity,

Ricarra Jones
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