



Testimony on **HB673/SB630**
Real Property – Contract Liens – Medical Debt
Position: **FAV**

To Chair Pena Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Maryland/DC. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation, representing 10,000+ members in our region. 1199SEIU members know firsthand that “Housing is Healthcare.” We urge a favorable report on HB673 to end the practice of home liens over medical debt.

In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly (MDGA) unanimously passed the Medical Debt Protection Act which prohibited liens on the homes of hospital patients who qualified for free healthcare. In passing that bill, the MDGA affirmed that patients should not be punished with home liens for seeking medically necessary healthcare. HB673 is an opportunity to apply this value more broadly, which will improve public health overall.

We are experiencing a critical short staffing crisis in healthcare, and Maryland has the longest Emergency Department wait times in the entire country. One of many ways to mitigate this crisis is to ensure that fewer individuals are hospitalized and forced to seek frequent medical care due to preventable illnesses, such as those caused by housing insecurity¹. Housing stability directly correlates with better physical and mental health outcomes. Improved health outcomes can decrease healthcare costs for patients in the long run and can lower hospitalizations, reducing unbalanced worker to patient ratios and bolstering quality of care for everyone.

No one should lose their home over the high cost of healthcare. **Please vote YES on HB673.**

In Unity,

Ricarra Jones, Political Director
1199SEIU UHW E., MD/DC
ricarra.jones@1199.org

¹ <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180313.396577/>