



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

7 School Street • Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2096

Balto. (410) 269-1940 • Fax (410) 280-2956

President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

**SB 981 - Hospitals - Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts - Policies
Senate Finance Committee
February 18, 2025**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 981. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Medical debt is a significant problem for Marylanders, disproportionately affecting minority communities and low-income households. SB 981 ensures financial assistance and prevents aggressive debt collection by requiring hospitals to develop policies for providing free and reduced cost care to patients, increasing transparency to allow patients an adequate amount of time to request financial assistance, and prohibits lawsuits for patients owing \$500 or less.

By expanding financial assistance eligibility and requiring clear and consistent hospital policies, this legislation supports consumers and healthcare workers alike from incurring crippling debt that often hinders their ability to obtain housing, education, and financial stability. It also ensures that hospitals provide assistance fairly and equitably to look out for our most vulnerable residents, reducing disparities in care and financial burden.

SB 981 is a crucial step toward a more fair and equitable healthcare system. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 981.