

SB0981_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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TESTIMONY ON SB#0981 - FAVORABLE
Hospitals - Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts - Policies

TO: Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0981, **Hospitals - Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts – Policies**

This bill is a priority for Progressive Maryland and the Frederick Progressives Chapter.

The goal of this bill is to alter provisions of law related to a hospital's financial assistance and collection of debts policies.

It is contemplated that it will accomplish the creation of a healthcare system in Maryland that addresses the medical debt crisis while providing for prioritization of patient's needs over profit before care. The bill will meet that goal through

- **Standardized Subsidy Levels:** The bill establishes minimum subsidy levels for reduced-cost care, ensuring equitable access to affordable healthcare across all hospitals. No Marylander should face unaffordable care based on the hospital they use.
- **Prohibition of Harmful Practices:** SB981 prevents hospitals from reporting medical debt to credit agencies, safeguarding patients' ability to access housing and essential services.
- **Restrictions on Patient Lawsuits:** The bill prohibits hospitals from suing patients for debts under \$500, providing protection for vulnerable individuals already facing financial and health uncertainties.

This bill makes the provision of care primary over cost of care treating health care as a human right. It does this by specifying the percentage by which a hospital is required to reduce a patient's out-of-pocket expenses under certain circumstances. It addresses how a patient's lack of knowledge of healthcare financing means they do not know how to request any financial assistance with their medical costs. The bill adds to the notice requirements relating to a hospital's financial assistance policy. Finally, it protects patients who have limited financial resources by prohibiting a hospital from filing a civil action to collect a debt against a patient whose outstanding debt is at or below \$500.

This is a bill that makes healthcare justice a priority in Maryland for all its residents.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0981.

