

Testimony in Support of HB268

HB268 Hospitals - Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts - Policies

House Health & Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

January 27, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting this testimony with my strong support of HB268, a hospital debt prevention bill that will deliver benefits to everyday Marylanders. I ask that you hold a favorable vote in Committee and that you urge your House colleagues to support HB268 in the full House. Marylanders will applaud your efforts to support them and to hold hospitals more accountable.

The bill is valuable, in particular, because it will create minimum standard levels of subsidy for patients eligible for reduced cost care. It should not matter which hospital a Marylander uses; we should be assured that we can afford care no matter which hospital in Maryland we use.

In addition to setting minimum standards, the measure will rein in some of our hospitals' harmful practices. For example, the practice of reporting hospital debt and other adverse information related to hospital debt to credit agencies, which undermines patients' ability to secure housing and other services, will be prohibited. And as things currently stand, hospitals are able to sue patients who are already burdened by uncertainty about their health and finances. HB268 takes a good step to address this situation by prohibiting hospitals from suing patients who owe less than \$500. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Walsh

1426 Cedarhurst Road
Shady Side, MD 20764
walsh2.michael@gmail.com