

Testimony on HB 268 by Dr. William Reid (Frederick County, Maryland)
Hospitals - Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts - Policies
Health and Government Operations
January 29, 2025
Position: Support HB 268

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and House and Government Operations Committee Members. My name is William Reid. I am a resident of Frederick, Maryland, a leader and board member of Progressive Maryland (PM), and the Chair of Frederick County Progressives (FCP). I appreciate the opportunity to testify in **support of HB 268 a bill that will promote accountability for hospitals and relief for patients, ensuring affordability and fairness.**

PM, a statewide grassroots advocacy organization, is committed to building a more equitable, patient-centered healthcare system. Based on our work with communities across Maryland, we recognize that many families face overwhelming medical debt, including hospital debt. While Maryland has made progress in protecting hospital patients' rights and addressing reimbursement for those eligible for reduced-cost or free care, more action is needed to prevent medical debt at its root.

PM and FCP strongly supports HB268, a hospital debt prevention bill that will provide critical protections for Marylanders. We urge the Committee to vote favorably and encourage full House support. This bill will promote accountability for hospitals and relief for patients, ensuring affordability and fairness.

Key provisions of HB268 include:

1. **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.
2. **Prohibition of Harmful Practices:** HB268 prevents hospitals from reporting medical debt to credit agencies, safeguarding patients' ability to access housing and essential services.
3. **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.

HB268 represents a meaningful step toward addressing the medical debt crisis in Maryland and fostering a healthcare system that prioritizes patient well-being. Thank you for your consideration and for supporting this important legislation.