

January 24, 2025

The Honorable CT Wilson, Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, House Economic Matters

**HB 268 – Hospitals - Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts -
Policies
Position: Favorable**

Honorable Chair Wilson and members of the committee:

I am an attorney at the Holland Law Firm, P.C., representing consumers all over Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support for HB268.

HB268 addresses several problems in hospital-based medical debt collection, including certain bad practices to which only a few providers resort. I highlight one of these practices that I have seen myself.

The practice of making medical debts “contracts under seal” exploits an archaic law to extend the statute of limitations. By placing “**(SEAL)**” next to the signature line of an admission agreement, a hospital can extend the statute of limitations from the usual 3 years to 12 years. The practical effect of the seal is one-sided: It gives the hospital longer to bring a breach-of-contract claim against the patient. It does not extend the patient’s time to bring a tort claim for medical negligence against the hospital. This is not a merely theoretical concern. I represented a Marylander who was sued by Carroll Hospital Center for several emergency room bills, some nearly a decade old. The emergency room admission forms had a “seal”, allowing the long delay in filing suit.

An ordinary Marylander faced with a medical situation serious enough to bring them to the hospital is extremely unlikely to know about “contracts under seal” and still less to consider the pros and cons of entering into one. Hospitals are not a proper place of 17th century legalisms.

I urge the Committee to give HB268 a **Favorable** report.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Emanwel J. Turnbull*
EMANWEL J. TURNBULL