



## Testimony on HB268

(MGA 2025)

Hospitals - Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts - Policies

Position: **FAV**

January 29, 2025

To Chair Pena-Melnyk and Health & Government Operations Committee Members:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation, with 10,000 members in Maryland and Washington, DC.

1199SEIU urges a **favorable** report on HB268 which will expand access to financial assistance to patients living paycheck to paycheck, increase transparency and consistency in hospital financial assistance, and prohibit medical debt lawsuits for patients owing \$500 or less.

Medical debt is a major problem for Maryland residents, especially those from low-income households and among communities of color. *An average hospital stay costs \$14,200.* Maryland hospitals often sue their former patients to collect medical debts below \$5,000.

SEIU 1199 is always concerned about the delivery of quality health care to consumers as well as the debt its own hard-working members might incur in receiving health care.

HB268 will advance those goals by setting standard subsidy levels for patients who are eligible for reduced cost care, ensuring all patients receive affordable care wherever they may be hospitalized; prohibiting reporting of hospital debt to credit agencies; and barring hospitals from suing patients who owe less than \$500.

HB 268 will go a long way to ensure that medical debt does not mean that consumers have to encounter further hardship in housing, education, and financial stability.

We support HB268 and urge a favorable report.

Respectfully,

Ricarra Jones

Political Director

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