

Testimony in support of LD 1937, Act to Require Hospitals and Hospital-Affiliated Providers To Provide Financial Assistance for Medical Care.

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My name is Shawn. I had a heart attack in 2019. In June of 2021, I was at work and wasn't feeling well. My boss drove me to the local hospital's walk-in care clinic. Based on my condition, I was transported by ambulance to their emergency room. I had insurance and 100 percent free care through the hospital at the time, but I was still billed by the hospital for being transported by ambulance to the ER. That bill was then sent to collections at the Thomas Agency. Even though the hospital owned the walk-in clinic, the hospital, and the ambulance transport, they have different billing departments that don't talk to each other, which was why I was billed and sent to collections. It didn't make any sense. Luckily, I was able to connect with someone at Maine's Consumer Assistance Program. They knew what to do. With their help, I requested that my balance be adjusted to 100 percent free care, which was finally done in January of 2024, more than a year and a half later.

Free care is important because it helped me get the health care that I desperately needed at the time, but there are problems with it. It should have been easy for the hospital to know that my ambulance bill should have been covered because I already had free care. I did not know how to deal with different billing departments and having a bill in collections was scary and stressful. I am thankful the Consumer Assistance Program was able to help me.