



House Bill 587 – Hospitals - Patient's Bill of Rights
Health and Government Operations Committee
18 February 2016
SUPPORT

The **Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform** (Coalition) is a nonpartisan, statewide alliance of thousands of individuals and 100 organizations. It works to promote health equity through access to high-quality, comprehensive and affordable health care for all Marylanders. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our support for House Bill 587 - Hospitals-Patient Bill of Rights.

There should be no question about the value to patients of knowing their full rights when they are under the care of a hospital and how to act upon any shortcomings in the application of those rights. This is an important form of consumer engagement and one that was addressed by the Health Services Cost Review Commission's Task Force. Its Report¹ cited the importance of a "streamlined processes for receiving information and insight from the community and applying that insight to inform policy decisions." Therefore, it is in the hospital's as well as the individual's best interest to ensure that the patient has a full understanding of their protections and rights. It is for these reasons that we support HB587.

We also believe that the need for this legislation is more important with the implementation of the All-Payer Model. The complex transformation of the delivery system has put an added burden on the consumer to become *health care aware*. That includes need to understand their rights in the delivery of their care. The HSCRC Task Force undertook a study to determine how hospitals were informing patients of their rights with a survey of Maryland's 47 hospital websites² (March 2015). The results were that on eight websites one could not readily find information on patients rights and 20 hospitals had no easily located information on the grievance and appeals process. Clearly more needs to be done and this legislation is an important first step.

In evaluating the need for this legislation it is useful to remember the conditions under which patients function when in the hospital. These are often physically painful and mentally stressful as I personally experienced with emergency surgery. In my case, there were such extreme procedural lapses that my surgeon urged me to file a complaint. Albeit I may be more aware of the requirements than most, this was not a step I would have taken without his urging. However, the result was a change in the triaging of patients in the emergency room and attention to post-surgical care. A positive example of the impact that an effective process can have both for the individual patient and for the hospital system more broadly.

Therefore, we request your support for HB587 and urge a favorable report.

¹ Consumer Engagement Task Force Report - page ii
<http://hscrc.maryland.gov/documents/md-maphs/wg-meet/ce/09-02/CETF-Commission-Report-FINAL.pdf>
² *ibid* - page 12