



January 31, 2024

House Committee on Health Care and Wellness
John L. O'Brien Building – Hearing Room A
504 15th Ave SW
Olympia, WA 98501

RE: House Committee on Health Care and Wellness Public Hearing on HB 2378

Dear Chair Ricceli and Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health Care and Wellness,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of [HB 2378](#)**, which builds upon the important work the Washington legislature has already begun to help protect patients from unexpected hospital facility fees. United States of Care (USofCare) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to ensure [everyone](#) has access to quality, affordable health care, regardless of health status, social need, or income. We work in states across the country to develop pragmatic policy solutions that are designed to respond to the needs of people. In Washington, we have supported the state's efforts to expand access to coverage and improve affordability for Washingtonians through the development of the Cascade Care and Select programs. In the other states we work in, we often highlight Washington as a pioneer in providing high-quality health care, addressing health disparities, and increasing affordability for people.

Unfortunately, despite this meaningful action to improve health care affordability taken by the Legislature, health care remains unaffordable for many in Washington. One of the main drivers of increasing health care costs can be traced to [health care consolidation](#) in Washington and nationwide. While hospitals have long charged facility fees for care delivered in emergency settings, we have seen a new trend nationwide of people being charged these fees when receiving care in hospital outpatient departments and clinics, with some people [being charged "facility fees"](#) without ever stepping foot in a facility.

A [recent survey](#) found that voters overwhelmingly support policy solutions that regulate facility fees. Nearly [three in four](#) voters across demographics support policy makers taking action to eliminate facility fees for outpatient services, regardless of where the care is provided. Furthermore, [81%](#) of voters support policymakers requiring providers to disclose facility fees upfront to patients before they are seen. HB 2378 does just that, building upon the legislature's [previous action](#) to reign in facility fees and joining the growing number of states limiting the locations where facility fees can be charged while ensuring transparency for patients who may be subject to these charges. To date, [13 states](#) have successfully passed legislation that seeks to protect people from unfair, unexpected facility fees, with [21 bills](#) (including HB 2378) up for consideration in 15 state legislatures so far this year.

States have taken their own unique approaches to tackling this issue. [Connecticut](#) led the way in banning facility fees for telehealth services and outpatient office visits and requiring hospitals to notify patients of any allowed fees prior to receiving services. [New York](#)'s and [Colorado](#)'s laws prohibit charging facility fees for accessing preventive services, where facility fees often exceed the cost of the actual preventive care provided. Last year, [Indiana](#) passed a sweeping ban on facility fees that limits what billing forms providers health systems are able to use. Additionally, [Maine](#) and [Colorado](#)'s legislation passed in 2023 both included authorization of a study on the impact of facility fees on state residents to inform further legislative action. With Washington so often leading the way in championing innovative health care solutions, HB 2378 is in line with these other state laws offering comprehensive protections from unfair facility fees.

United States of Care is supportive of HB 2378 and strongly encourages the committee to vote in favor of this bill that helps to ensure Washingtonians have access to the medical care they need without worrying about its cost. We thank the committee for its work on this issue and urge the committee to consider United States of Care a resource moving forward. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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