

ERIN CLINE

Port Angeles, WA

Re: Notice of Charity Care Availability - HB 1359 & SB 5231

Dear Washington State Legislature:

Please support HB 1359 and SB 5231. I am a single mom raising a 4-year-old son on limited income.

I was getting out of an abusive marriage and my son and I were homeless when I went to the emergency room with bad chest pain and was unable to breathe. I had pneumonia and pleurisy.

I cooperated with the hospital, and explained that my son and I were homeless, living on food stamps, and had no insurance or income to pay the bill. But no one explained charity care to me or offered me an application that I remember. I was sued by a collection agency. The judge said I was two days late and had to pay the \$7,218.13 bill.

I cannot describe in words how stressful this experience has been for me and how grateful I am that my family law attorney knew to call the Northwest Justice Project for information. My attorney armed me with the information and courage I needed to return to the hospital and explain my charity care rights to them. The person in the business office at the hospital didn't understand what I was talking about until I showed him the law.

My experience shows that some hospitals don't fully understand how Charity Care works. So, it is critically important that hospitals and their collection agencies provide notice that charity care is available so people like me can get more information and take the initiative before being sued by a collection agency. Charity Care notice should be in writing on bills so people like me can get help when there is an obvious need for it. Please support HB 1359 and SB 5231.

Thank you,

Erin Cline