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# Addressing Medical Debt Crisis for Low Income Patients

## **SUMMIT ON HEALTH CARE COVERAGE AND ACCESS FOR MUSICIANS Arlington, VA**

Alan Balch, PhD  
March 5 , 2020

# Our Mission



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Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) is a national 501(c)3 non-profit organization which provides case management services and financial aid to those with chronic, life-threatening and debilitating illnesses.

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## PATIENT ADVOCATE FOUNDATION SERVICE AREAS

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CASE  
MANAGEMENT



FINANCIAL  
SUPPORT  
PROGRAMS



CO-PAY RELIEF  
PROGRAM



PATIENT  
EDUCATION &  
EMPOWERMENT



HEALTH EQUITY  
& COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT



PATIENT IMPACT

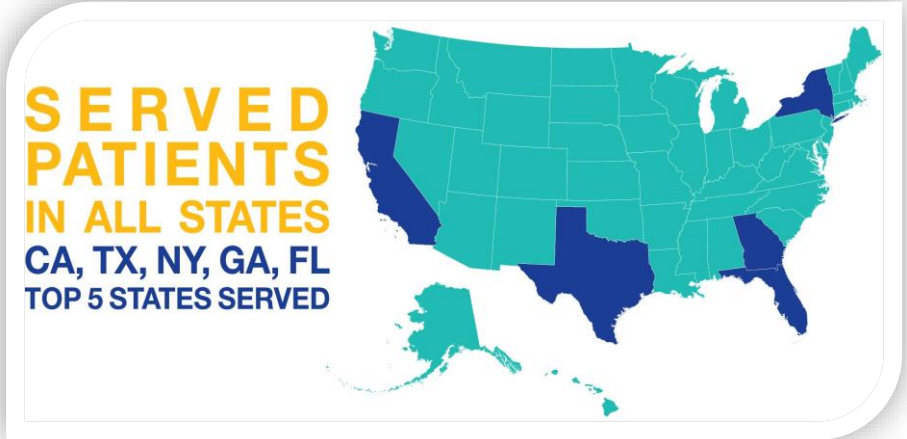


SPECIAL EVENTS



HEALTH SERVICES  
RESEARCH  
INITIATIVES

# PAF: Who We Serve



Patients reported

**619**

Different diagnoses

## SUMMARY OF 2019 PATIENT CASES

Total Patient Case Count	145,815
Case Management Cases	23,702
Co-Pay Relief Cases	73,007
Financial Support Programs Cases	42,124
Patient Services Email Helpline Sessions	6,982

Total Patients Assisted by PAF between 1994 and 2019	1,364,370
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# Financial Aid Fund Program Highlights

1,183

Patients Served

\$721,250

Paid in Patient Grants

\$300-\$1000

Grant Award Range

6 FAF Funds

Donna, Heart Valve, LEISHLine, Merkel Cell, MBC,  
Mahan

# Precision Navigation

- Getting the right help, to the right patient, at the right time.
- Listening to and documenting the real and immediate problems a patient is facing.
- Figuring out how to help them in ways that matter to them.
- Average of ten days to close



*"PAF's service was absolutely excellent and my case manager was a godsend. I needed assistance with disability and her handling of my issue was so professional."*

**Michael | Pennsylvania**  
Cancer

## Case Management Programs

### Case Management Partnerships

- American Cancer Society Partnership
- LIVESTRONG Cancer Navigation Services
- LIVESTRONG Fertility Program

### Current MedCareLine and Education Programs

- ALS Associations' Medicare Resource Line
- Consumer Education and Training Center Partnership
- Colorectal CareLine
- Donna CareLine
- Heart Valve CareLine
- Hepatitis C CareLine
- HIV, AIDS and Prevention CareLine
- Know Your Tumor™ CareLine
- Jennifer Jaffe CareLine
- Migraine CareLine
- Personalized Medicine CareLine
- Sickle Cell CareLine
- West Virginia Lung Cancer CareLine
- ZERO360 : Comprehensive Patient Support





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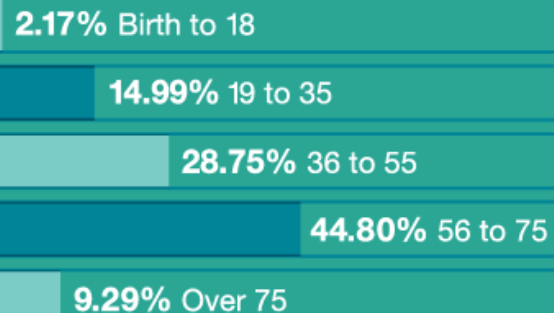
Taskbar icons: File Explorer, Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Word, PowerPoint, OneDrive, etc.

System tray: Network, Volume, Date/Time (1:19 PM 3/4/2020)

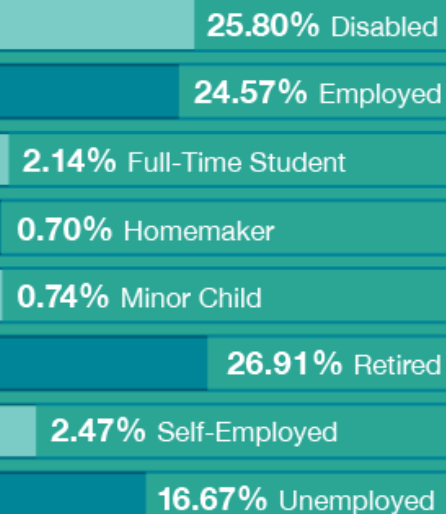


# CASE MANAGEMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

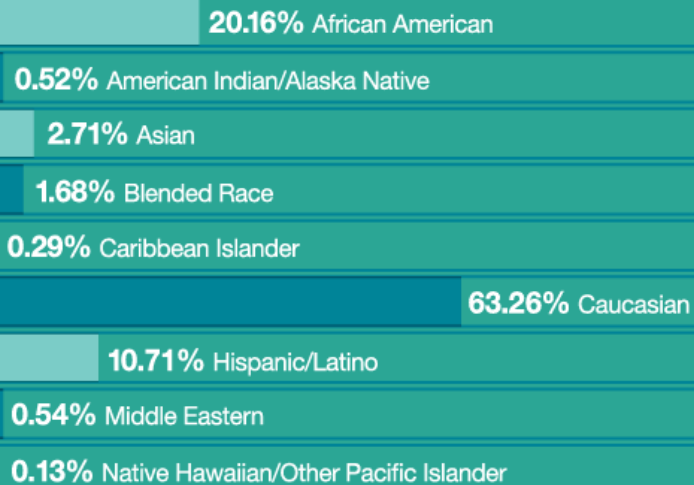
## AGE OF PATIENTS



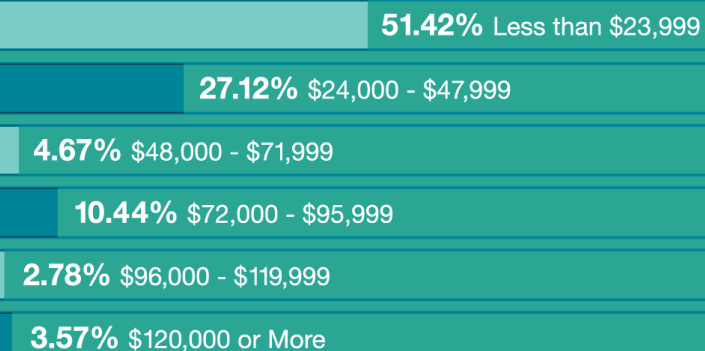
## EMPLOYMENT STATUS



## ETHNICITY



## INCOME GROUPS



# ROADBLOCKS TO ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

## Insurance Access

Lack of insurance, insurance with high out-of-pocket requirements and/or service limitations and low insurance literacy contribute to routine and significant access barriers.



## Employment Protections & Workplace Entitlements

Commonly insurance benefits are provided through employers, as are income replacement policies (STD/LTD), and are jeopardized if the employee cannot work. Patients often lack knowledge about employee protections and how to access them: FMLA, ADA, COBRA.



## Medical Debt & Ability to Pay

Patients receive healthcare services from a multitude of providers/facilities and there are costs associated with each. Medical debt mounts quickly, at the very time when their ability to pay is hardest.



## Emotional Distress

Patients' inability to access and afford necessary healthcare and maintain their financial stability creates emotional trauma that impacts their overall health.



## Cost-of-Living Impacts

When people become ill, or live with a chronic disease, their income is almost always impacted. Many patients cannot sustain their basic needs such as housing, transportation, food and utilities.

# Social Determinants of Health

## Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment Income Expenses Debt Medical bills Support	Housing Transportation Safety Parks Playgrounds Walkability Zip code / geography	Literacy Language Early childhood education Vocational training Higher education	Hunger Access to healthy options	Social integration Support systems Community engagement Discrimination Stress	Health coverage Provider availability Provider linguistic and cultural competency Quality of care
<b>Health Outcomes</b> Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations					

# Service Area Concentrations

## **Level 1 – Reduce financial burden**

- Financial support: transportation, housing, food, utility shut off
- Educational and emotional support: support groups, nutritional and wellness

## **Level 2 – Enroll in insurance and social programs**

- Eligibility and enrollment: Medicare, Medicaid, Disability, ACA Products, Insurance, charity care, negotiation of payment plans or discounts for medical care
- Financial support: Co-pay, discount and indigent drug programs,

## **Level 3 – Insurance navigation**

- Insurance utilization: benefit review, preauthorization, clinical appeals
- Hospital billing and coding issues
- Clinical Trial
- Medical Treatment Decision

# Case Management Program Highlights

**24,000**

Patients Served

**\$1,000**

Average debt Relief per case

16 cases of at least \$100K in debt relief

**600+ Diagnoses**

Cardiovascular cases increased 39%

Heart Valve cases increased 32%

Oncology cases represent 57%

**24 Patient Programs**

15 oncology

9 non-oncology

12 non-profit and academic partnerships

# Being Responsive to the Needs of Consumers

We identified more than 200 unique issues reported by patients calling for assistance. These are the top issues by prevalence. No single problem is the problem, but it is rather a combination of many problems.

Issue Reported by Patient	Percentage
Transportation expenses	8.16%
Hospital/facility cost share	7.49%
Medication cost share	6.78%
Rent/mortgage	5.62%
Utility/shut off notice	4.82%
Medicare Part B cost share	4.43%
Diagnosis out-of-scope	3.56%
Medicare Part D cost share	3.03%
No access to care	2.77%
Food/nutritional needs	2.19%

# Unmet Needs in Navigation

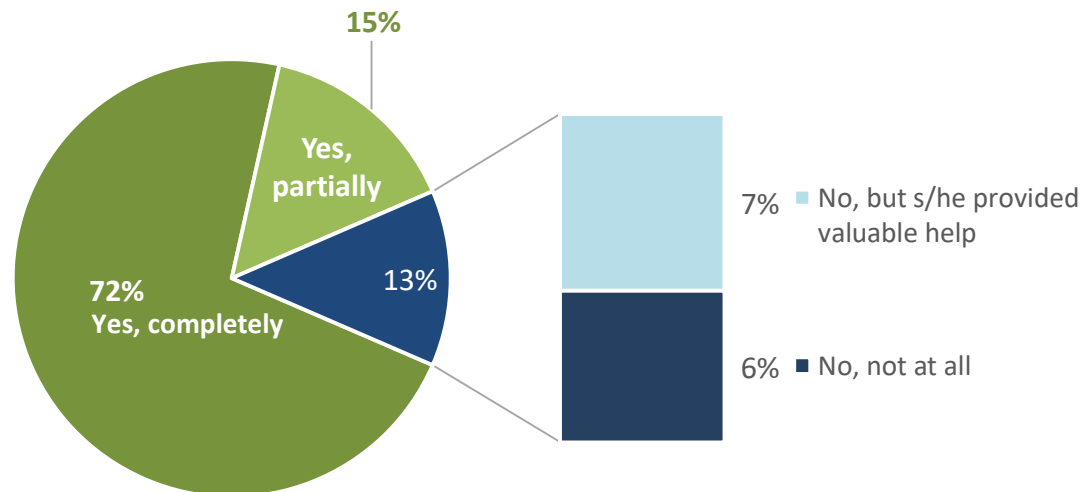
- Which are most important issues with which you need help?

	CM Cancer	CM Breast	CM Other
Day-to-day living expenses (rent/mortgage/utilities)	65%	69%	61%
Hospital bills	40%	41%	40%
Health insurance premiums	29%	27%	30%
Imaging like x-rays, MRIs, or CT/PET scans	28%	28%	28%
Transportation (to and from treatment)	19%	18%	20%

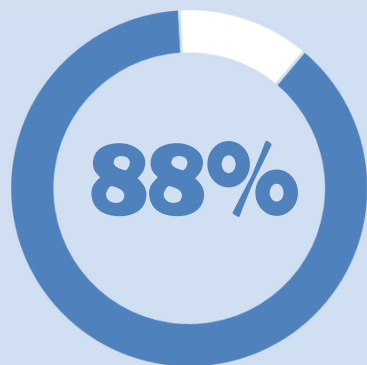


## PATIENT REPORTED SATISFACTION

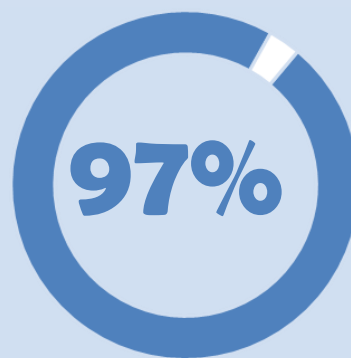
Was the staff able to resolve the caller's issue?



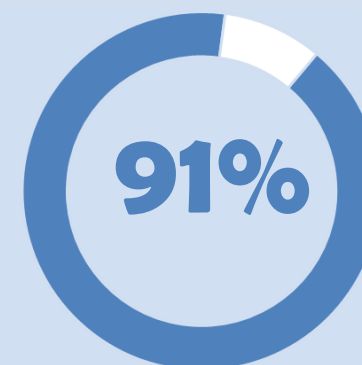
Patients rating value of PAF as "8" or higher (out of 10)



Patients that would recommend PAF to others



Patients that report being satisfied with PAF services



# A CASE STUDY

## ISSUES:

- Insured Caucasian male in his 50's
- Patient suffered a severe stroke
- Seen first at the nearest available Emergency Room - then transferred to a University Hospital for expert care
- Needs assistance with appealing Out-Of-Network charges
- Needs assistance with unpaid medical bills

## PAF STEPS TO RESOLUTION:

- Reconciled Explanation of Benefit statements from both facilities against billed charges
- Researched appeal options - identifying a statewide “hold harmless” protection for patients impacted by “surprise” bills resulting from emergency care
- In collaboration with the patient, assembled an appeal addressing the out-of-network reimbursement rate based on the “hold harmless” provision, as there wasn't an in-network hospital with the scope of medical expertise necessary to save his life
- The **appeal was successful** and the insurer approved additional reimbursement to the university hospital
- The hospital then excused the remainder of the patient's out of pocket responsibility – **leaving the patient with a zero balance**

# A CASE STUDY

## ISSUE:

- African American male in his 60's
- Insured
- Diagnosed with prostate cancer
- Needs assistance obtaining full time housing
- Needs information on available resources to assist with cost of living expenses in the future

## PAF STEPS TO RESOLUTION:

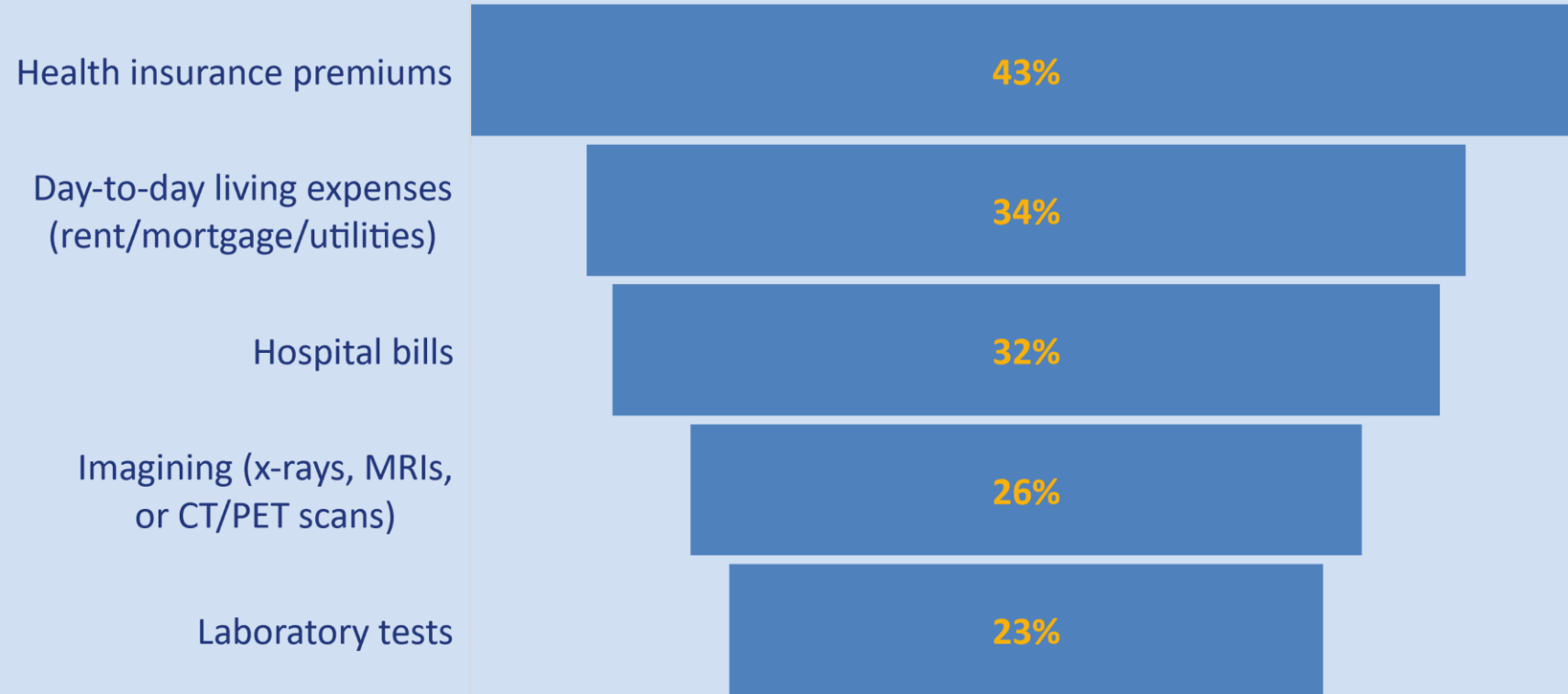
- Patient is a commercial truck driver and did not need private, daily housing prior to his diagnosis – requires it now during treatment and recuperation period
- Researched available options and **connected the patient to a relief fund specifically for truckers**
- Spoke with four local resources to **identify assistance for immediate and potential future cost of living needs**
- **Connected the patient to a grant program** for working applicants in need of emergency financial assistance - rent vouchers and energy assistance
- Supplied patient with a directory for locating resources for future needs

## EMBEDDED MEASUREMENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Domain	Mechanism	Measure
<i>Health Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Discuss patient situation, in depth, to identify misconceptions, goals, barriers, and solutions</li> <li>•Educating patients on relevant content areas and the process requirements for a desired goal</li> </ul>	<p><b>48%</b> Utilized PAF materials</p> <p><b>↗ 2.2</b> eHealth Literacy Score</p>
<i>Navigation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Identify resources and providing support to facilitate connection to these resources</li> <li>•Walk patients through a task (many employ the “See One, Do One, Teach One” strategy)</li> </ul>	<p><b>↗ .52</b> Confidence in Navigation</p>
<i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Model communication skills and coach callers on effective approaches to talk to healthcare providers and insurers</li> </ul>	<p><b>↗ .32</b> Confidence in Communication</p>
<i>Self-Advocacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Identify barriers that may emerge or are currently standing in the way of their goals.</li> <li>•Provide coaching to empower patients to be their own advocate and engage in their health and care</li> </ul>	<p>No change on current metrics But...</p> <p><b>↘ .86</b> General Distress</p>

## MOST FREQUENTLY REPORTED UNMET NEEDS

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## OTHER REPORTED UNMET NEEDS



### Daily Living Needs

Expenses related to care giving

13%

Transportation (to and from treatment)

11%

Nutrition needs (due to treatment)

11%

10% 11% 11% 12% 12% 13% 13% 14%



### Medical Needs

Testing for various genes or biomarkers

13%

Home healthcare

10%

Rehabilitation services

8%

Medical device

5%

0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12% 14%

## *Educational Resources Organized by Topics*

- The Language of Insurance
- Understanding Health Insurance
- Choosing a Health Plan
- Common Barriers – Affordability & Costs
- Medication Benefits & Your Formulary
- Interacting with Insurer
- Interacting with Your Physician
- Insurance Denials & Appeals
- Maintaining Employment & Job Benefits
- Preserving Income & Federal Benefits
- Laws & Protections
- Getting Care While Uninsured







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## FIND THE MISSING PIECES

**Patient Advocate  
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# Insured and Uninsured Resource Directory

Search criteria: age, state, diagnosis, and type of assistance.

<https://www.patientadvocate.org/explore-our-resources/national-financial-resource-directory/>

Housing & Lodging	Housekeeping and Repairs
Utilities	Hospice & End of Life
Transportation Assistance	Insurance Premium Assistance
➤ Nonprofit Copay Programs	➤ Legal or Advocate Services
➤ Other Medication Assistance	Medical Equipment or Supplies
➤ Drug Manufacturers Patient Programs	Disease Information, Educational & Research
Dental Care	Rehabilitation Assistance
Insurance Policy Options	Support for Caregivers
Emotional Support & Community	Vision Care & Eyeglasses
Childcare Resources	➤ Wish Fulfillment & Camps
Clinical Trial Assistance	Affordable Options for Care
➤ Reconstructive Surgery	Screening Services
Employment	Government Services & Programs
➤ Fertility Related Services	Resource Directories & Finders
Food & Nutrition	➤ Medical Bills & General Financial
➤ Patient Fundraising Programs	Credit & Financial Management
Home health, Respite, or Day Care	Academic Scholarships

Type of Assistance Needed:

35+ Categories!!



# My Resource Search Mobile Phone App

Update for iOS 10.3 coming in May 2017!



My Resources

[www.patientadvocate.org/myresources](http://www.patientadvocate.org/myresources)

Or from APP STORE directly from your phone



P: 800.532.5274  
[www.patientadvocate.org/gethelp](http://www.patientadvocate.org/gethelp)

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# Patient Empowerment Webinar Series

 <b>Clinical Trials</b> How could I benefit from one? What's in it for me? 	 <b>Home Health Benefits</b> What You Need to Know about Home Health & Nursing Home Care 	 <b>Clinical Trials</b> How to Search, Locate a Trial, and Enroll 	 <b>Insurance Denials</b> How to Construct a Successful Appeal 
 <b>Preparing for Open Enrollment</b> Changing Plans & Enrolling in New Insurance 	 <b>Financial Barriers</b> Tips for Affording Medications & Prescribed Drugs 	 <b>Medicare Open Enrollment Basics</b> 	 <b>Disability Benefits</b> How to Access Social Security Disability Benefits 
 <b>Maximizing Your Coverage</b> Getting the Most Out of Your Insurance Benefits 	 <b>Medicare Part D Open Enrollment</b> 	 <b>Understanding the Basics of Medicare</b> 	 <b>Still Uninsured After Open Enrollment?</b> A discussion on how to access care you need 

# Migraine Educational Resource Area



[www.patientadvocate.org/migrainematters](http://www.patientadvocate.org/migrainematters)

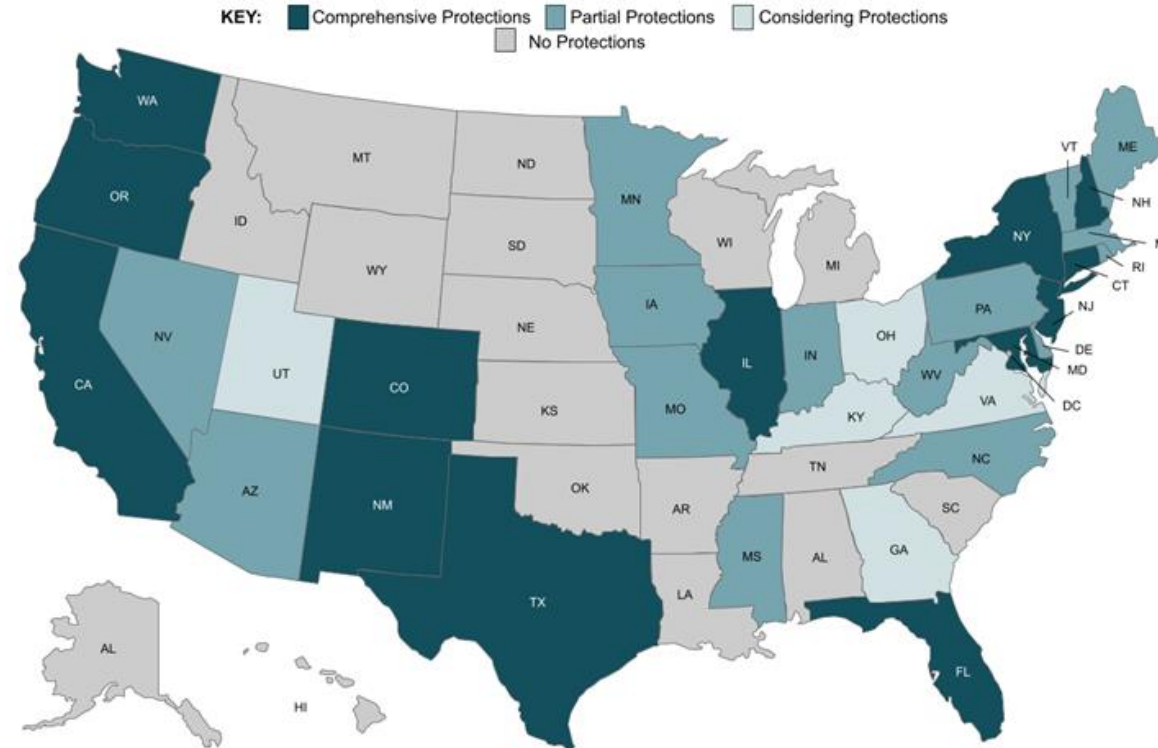
## Presents Various Content Types

- Webinars, Videos, Interactive Graphics, Infographics
- Includes Compelling Statistic or Visual Fact
- Resources in the form of web articles, websites, PDFs, Publications, Images, audio podcasts

## 11 Possible Categories of Resources to Choose From to Customize Your Page

- Communication with your Doctors
- Access to Treatment
- Understanding Your Diagnosis
- Living with Migraine
- Understanding Insurance Coverage
- Migraine & the Workplace
- Caring for a Migraine Patient
- Emotional Support & Community
- Medical Research & News
- Advocating for Change
- For Providers & Medical Professionals

# Surprise Medical Bills: State Activity



- 28 states have enacted protections to address surprise medical bills
- Currently, Virginia, Ohio and Georgia are considering protections.
- some of the protections include an opt-in for ERISA plans circumventing the need to wait on a federal solution (e.g., VA proposal)

# Surprise Medical Bills

**TheUpshot**

***Ban on Surprise Medical  
Bills May Pass After All***

NY Times, Dec 8, 2019

POLITICS

**A Deal To End Surprise Medical Billing  
Was Tanked At The Last Minute**

BuzzFeed News, Dec 29, 2019

HEALTH CARE

**Powerful House committee is latest to take stab at 'surprise' billing fix**

Politico, Jan 16, 2020



# Balance Billing – Federal Activity

- Senate HELP Committee – “Lower Health Care Costs Act”
  - S. 1895, Sens. Alexander (R-TN) and Murray (D-WA)
  - Marked up and reported out of committee, July 8, 2019
- House E&C Committee – “No Surprises Act”
  - H.R. 3630, Reps. Pallone (D-NJ) and Walden (R-OR)
  - Marked up and reported out of committee, July 17, 2019
- “STOP Surprise Medical Billing Act” - S. 1531, Sens. Cassidy (R-LA) and Hassan (D-NH)
- S. 1266, Sen. Scott (R-FL)
- H.R. 3502, Reps. Ruiz (D-NY) and Rep. Roe (R-TN)
- H.R. 861, Rep. Doggett (R-TX)

# Provisions

- Settings
- Hold harmless
- Ban on balance billing
- Payment standard
- Dispute resolution
- Interaction with state laws
- Enforcement



Solving Insurance and Healthcare Access Issues | since 1996

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