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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 8 – Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022)

Economic Matters Committee

February 15, 2022

SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 8 (HB8) would establish the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (FAMLI) to be administered by the Maryland Department of Labor. Eligible workers and employers would contribute to the fund from each paycheck. The program would approve benefits for up to twelve weeks and payments to workers will range from \$50 - \$1000 each week, based on the recipient's income.

Written Comments: The need for access to paid leave has been greatly exasperated by the pandemic. No one should have to choose between their job or taking care of their own or a loved one's health. Far too many Marylanders must make this impossible choice when they are facing a long term illness, welcoming a new child, or needing significant time to care for an aging parent. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 17% of workers in the Mid-Atlantic Region have access to paid family leave. The Time to Care Act would change that by guaranteeing every worker in Maryland paid leave.

Preserving life and health is a central tenet in Judaism and paramount above all else, and this bill will ensure more people are able to stay healthy. Paid family and medical leave benefits everyone and is an issue that 88% of Marylanders support. Women and people of color are disproportionately impacted when they do not have access to leave, and in too many cases these groups are forced to leave the labor force to care for their families or health, increasing turnover among workers. At a time when every business is competing to attract and retain labor, small businesses are often the ones left behind by large, out-of-state companies who can better afford to offer paid leave. This program will level the playing field among businesses and workers.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB 8.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.