



February 15, 2022

**House Economic Matters Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 8 Labor and Employment- Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program- Establishment
(Time to Care Act 2022)*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. **Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 77,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 8- Labor and Employment- Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program- Establishment- (Time to Care Act 2022). This bill establishes a Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program through which employees may take up to 12 weeks of paid leave from their jobs to care for new children, family members with serious health conditions or disabilities, family members who are leaving for deployment, or for their own health conditions.

BHSB supports HB 8 because policies like expansion of paid family and medical leave mitigate adverse childhood experiences and support healthy development in early childhood. Low-wage families are the most in need of financial support when illness strikes or when a child is born and the most likely to take on the care of a family member because they cannot afford a professional caregiver. ¹ Studies show that children living in poverty are five times more likely to experience abuse and neglect and other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which begins a lifelong struggle with negative mental, behavioral, and physical health outcomes.² The financial support that paid leave provides allows new mothers to focus on building nurturing relationships that promote cognitive development, social and emotional competence, and resiliency. It has been shown to reduce depressive symptoms in new mothers, boost maternal and child health and mental health outcomes, and promote parent-child attachment. ³

Paid Leave is good for families, good for public health, and good for Maryland’s economy.

The CDC estimates lifetime costs associated with ACEs at approximately \$2 trillion nationwide, measures that prevent and address childhood trauma not only work to improve the public health of our state, but also have a high rate of return on investment and decrease health and behavioral health care costs in the long term. Maryland must continue to enact policies like paid family and medical leave that prevent and mitigate ACEs. **As such, BHSB urges the House Economic Matters Committee to support HB 8.**

¹ Center for American Progress. (2019). *Paid Family and Medical Leave Must Be Comprehensive to Help Workers and Their Children*. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/07/16/472026/paid-family-medical-leave-must-comprehensive-help-workers-children/>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021)
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html>

³ Beckman, K. A., PhD, MPH (2017). Mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences Through Investments in Early Childhood Programs, *Academic Pediatrics*, 17(7) 28-29. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2016.09.004>