



**Testimony of Montgomery County Young Democrats to House Economic Matters Committee In Support of HB 8 – Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022)**

**February 15th, 2022  
Favorable**

The Montgomery County Young Democrats (MCYD) urge the House Economic Matters Committee to support [HB 8](#), also known as the Time to Care Act, which would establish a paid family and medical leave program that would provide up to twelve weeks of leave and replace a substantial share of workers' wages. This bill would help Maryland families, benefit businesses, and ensure that people can care for their loved ones in times of need.

MCYD is an organization of young Democrats ages 14-35 that offers a voice for young people who live, work, or go to school in Montgomery County, and who seek progressive change in order to secure a just and stable future for all of the county and state's residents.

Starting on January 1, 2023, the Time to Care Act creates an insurance pool into which workers and their employers make contributions, an 0.75% contribution from each paycheck. This pool would be used to fund up to twelve weeks of leave for Maryland employees if they need to take time off to care for their newly born children, family members with serious health conditions or disabilities, military family members, or to care for themselves. The bill would replace a substantial share of workers' wages.

MCYD urges that paid family leave apply equally to all working people regardless of gender, and reflect an inclusive definition of family. Low income workers should also receive a larger percentage of their income to make it affordable for them to take time off. And all workers must receive protection against the threat of losing their jobs for taking time off.

A number of MCYD members are interested in having children or caring for our family members, and have struggled to get time off. Some of us have been fortunate enough to have understanding employers who offer leave, but others do not. Providing paid and family medical leave to workers reduces the spread of illness, helps people recover faster, and improves the health of parents and their children. No one should be deprived of spending time with their newborn daughters or sons. And people who want to take care of parents and family members with health problems should be rewarded, not punished.

The United States is alone among wealthy industrialized countries in that it does not have a national paid family leave program. As a result, many Marylanders can't take time off to care for themselves or loved ones. People should not be forced to choose between the jobs they need to survive and taking care of their family members-especially during a pandemic.

HB 8 would end this harmful state of affairs and it will benefit everyone. It will: 1) ensure Maryland workers can afford to care for their family members when they need to, 2) help companies recruit and retain employees, and improve morale and increase productivity in the workplace, 3) help the state government and taxpayers through reduced Medicaid spending, less reliance on social services, and fewer people needing unemployed benefits, and 4) prevent the spread of diseases, including COVID-19, and improve public health.

When workers can't get paid family leave, they can't bond with their children, they often miss critical doctors' appointments, their family members get sick and suffer alone, and families face financial hardship. In recent years nine states and the District of Columbia have enacted paid family leave; Maryland should follow in their footsteps and be the tenth state.

Paid family leave is also extremely popular, supported by an overwhelming majority of Marylanders. The Maryland General Assembly should lead the way and pass the Time to Care Act to benefit workers and families, and show that Maryland cares about family values.

The Montgomery County Young Democrats urge the Committee to favorably report this bill.

