

February 10, 2022
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TESTIMONY ON SB0275 POSITION: FAVORABLE
**Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program –
Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022)**

TO: Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Daniel Ring

OPENING: My name is Daniel Ring. I am a resident of District 19. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0275, Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022).

As an public school educator, a husband, a son, and especially a parent of two young children, I know it is time for Maryland to offer paid family leave for everyone in our state. My recent struggles with obtaining leave illustrate precisely why we need this legislation as soon as possible.

As an employee of one of the largest, best school systems in the country, I had assumed that I would receive parental leave when I needed it and didn't check into it. However, when we realized that my second child was to be born in December, I began to ask around how to apply. I found out that no such parental leave exists in the school system. New mothers must apply for disability and new fathers can only take any sick leave or unpaid leave.

I was dismayed but also simply accepted the fact that the 3.5 weeks of leave I had saved up over my entire 8 years of teaching were for a purpose for such as this. It wouldn't be enough for sure, but it would be something. However, then I contracted a virus from my toddler and was out for a week. As a result I only had 2.5 weeks left of leave.

I asked other employees, the union, and the Board of Education about any other options for extending paid leave. However every response boiled down to one line: you're on your own.

Thankfully, as I was lucky enough to be born into a family with financial means to help us out, I was able to take unpaid leave in addition to my paid sick leave. This meant I was able to assist my wife in preparing a toddler for daycare in the morning, helping with her medical care after surgery, and generally taking care of our home and family.

Yet still, 2 months later, we are trying to fill the hole in our savings from my unpaid time, while providing for 2 children.

I still find myself pondering what would happen if we didn't have any family support. How would we choose between taking care of our family and putting food on the table? How would we choose between helping our children develop in their most vulnerable stages and paying for housing?

I also ponder what benefits my family might have gained if I had 12 weeks of paid leave. What did I miss out on from that time we could have spent together? Those days with my newborn daughter are gone. The loss is simply immeasurable and irrecoverable.

Our leave policy creates an impossible decision that no one should have to make. We need to support our families and our fellow citizens at their most vulnerable, and this bill is a necessary step in the right direction.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0275.