

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

The Southwest Partnership Workforce Development Committee would like to express our strong support for HB0008/SB0275 Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022).

A Family and Medical Leave Insurance program will ensure that members of our community--and all Marylanders--have access to the time needed to care for family members and welcome new family members into their lives without having to sacrifice their pay--or their jobs.

The Southwest Partnership is a coalition of seven neighborhood associations and six anchor institutions in Southwest Baltimore. We work to implement our Vision Plan for our seven neighborhoods and build an awesome, healthy, architecturally beautiful, diverse, cohesive community of choice built on mutual respect and shared responsibility.

As the Workforce Development Committee, we are a group of committed community members who work together to ensure that all of our neighbors have access to high quality, family sustaining employment. One of our key strategies is to 'reduce barriers to employment and develop workforce opportunities in the Southwest Partnership area'. A lack of paid Family and Medical Leave is a major barrier to long term, high quality employment--and the economic stability that should result from that employment. Through Southwest Works, our workforce development program that connects local residents to good local jobs, we regularly meet with community members who are out of work because of time spent caring for family members--and as a result have struggled economically and have gaps on their resumes that make getting hired in high quality jobs more challenging.

86% of Maryland workers in private industry do not currently have access to paid Family and Medical Leave-- and these workers are very often low wage workers of color--like ourselves, our families, and our neighbors. Many community members work for themselves, or work multiple gig jobs to support themselves and their families--this bill would allow them time they need to care for themselves and their families without losing all their income.

The Time to Care Act of 2022, in establishing an insurance program that all employers, employees, and people who are self-employed can pay a small amount into in order to receive these benefits removes much of the burden of providing paid Family and Medical Leave from small employers--and will help ensure that all Marylanders--and all members of our community in Southwest Baltimore have access to paid time to heal, care, and welcome new family members.