



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 275

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

Senate Finance Committee

February 10, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Maryland Hunger Solutions fully supports SB 275, which establishes a Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program through that will allow employees to 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.

As a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit organization working to end hunger and improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of individuals, children, and families in Maryland, we understand that food insecurity can only be solved by also addressing the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

SB 275 helps to do so by providing economic stability for working Marylanders, and in particular those living in or near poverty. As Maryland strives to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, too many families have to worry about losing their jobs or sacrificing needed income if they or someone in their family becomes ill. With the continuing threat of this public health crisis in mind, we need to ensure that families are able to recover from illness without risking their economic stability at a time they can least afford it. Economic stability provides food stability.

Although Maryland is one of the wealthiest states in the nation, over 860,000 Marylanders struggle with food insecurity and rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for help keeping food on the table, a number that has continued to rise throughout the pandemic. At the same time, food prices have skyrocketed nearly 7% over the past two years and are projected to continue increasing at historic levels.

In these tough economic times, having a stable income can be the difference between putting food on the table or families having to skip a meal. SB 275 ensures that Marylanders will not have to worry about losing income –or their employment – in order to care for themselves and their families. In essence, workers won't be forced to choose between the families they love and the jobs they need.

Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports and respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 275 as it creates food security by way of economic stability for all Marylanders, and in particular those working while living in or near poverty.

Thank you for your consideration.