

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, 2022

FAVORABLE

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

My name is Leslye Dwight, a District 27B resident, submitting this testimony in support of SB 275, the Time to Care Act of 2022. Currently, I am an expecting mother whose full -time job has been terminated due to lack of funding at the organization for which I am currently employed. While the search has been ongoing to find new employment, the reality is that when that happens, I will not have been in a new position to either a) be covered by FMLA for unpaid maternity leave or b) have accrued enough leave that would allow me to physically heal from a delivery or have enough time to bond and care for my newborn child.

This circumstance is clearly through no fault of my own. Even when you consider that I have been fiscally prudent and routinely saving, 6 weeks of my personal savings without additional income coming into my household, in the form of paid leave, will create a financial hardship for myself and my family. Prior to this, I was already an advocate of the Time to Care Act but it still hits very different when it becomes your personal reality.

While this may not be your reality, I am asking you to put yourself in the shoes of the many Marylanders who are currently or will face this harsh reality. The numerous stories and data available about paid family and medical leave insurance programs display the positive impact it will have on Marylanders. The Time to Care Act will help address the economic hardship, stress, and other burdens that come into play when caring for new babies, loved ones with serious health conditions, or yourself. Employees' ability to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave will help Maryland families meet their caregiving, employment, and financial needs and commitments while caring for their family. No Marylander should have to choose between the job they need and the family they love when a medical crisis strikes or a new child is welcomed into the home, which is why we need comprehensive paid family and medical leave in Maryland.

An OpinionWorks study conducted from December 15, 2021- January 10, 2022, showed overwhelming support for paid family leave in Maryland that crosses all partisan and geographic lines. Eighty-eight percent of Maryland voters favor creation of "a family and medical leave insurance program that would provide workers with partial wage replacement for up to 12 weeks when they need time away from work to care for a new child, seriously ill family member, or their own serious health condition." We must ensure that our paid family and medical leave program covers all working people, applies equally to everyone, covers all the well-established reasons people need leave, reflects an inclusive definition of family, and provides up to 12 weeks of leave and job security. SB 275 has all of these key components of a meaningful paid family and medical leave program, and I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 275.

Sincerely,

Leslye Dwight

10808 Hollaway Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
leslyedwight@gmail.com