

February 8, 2022

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB275

**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: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern, and I am testifying in favor of SB275, the Time to Care Act, as a resident of Montgomery County's District 16 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda.

The Jewish text that shapes my religious and moral conviction that every employee in the state of Maryland should have access to paid family and medical leave explains that *pikuach nefesh*, the saving of a life, supersedes all other commandments. This assures us that we have a moral obligation to pursue life at any cost. Offering paid leave to employees is an act of *pikuach nefesh* since it prioritizes people's health and well-being. This is a directive for us to secure the wellness of the labor force, which passing the Time to Care Act can help to do.

I have used employer sponsored paid family leave during three crucial times of my life - the birth of my two children, the major illness of my spouse, and during the last weeks of my mother's life. I was one of the fortunate Americans who worked for a Fortune 500 Company that offered this benefit. I know personally how invaluable this paid time off was for me and my family. It is a benefit that all employees should have when these life events occur.

Maryland needs to pass a comprehensive paid family and medical leave law that allows workers to care for themselves and family members without sacrificing their livelihood. We know that caregiving now spans the life cycle of all families from the care of a newborn, to a sick loved one, an aging family member, and the employee's own health.

Giving people 12 weeks of paid leave will remove the stress and burden of taking an unpaid day off, which might mean job termination. No one should ever be asked to make that choice, yet too many workers who need time off often do so at the expense of their own financial well-being. Especially during this time of the unprecedented pandemic when so many are caring for family members, the need is even more crucial for this coverage.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB275