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**Testimony in Support of SB 0275
Paid Family and Medical Leave – Time to Care Act of 2022**

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

FROM: David Sieradzki

My name is David Sieradzki. I am a resident of District 16 (Bethesda) and am submitting this testimony in support of SB 0275, the Time to Care Act of 2022.

Maryland should enable all workers to take time off when they suddenly fall ill and are unable to go to their jobs, when they need to take care of family members who experience unexpected health crises, or when they or other members of their families confront other pressing challenges. We shouldn't force people to lose wages and face the risk of being fired, thus impoverishing themselves and their families, at the very time when they need to deal with urgent family crises.

My wife and I have experienced these issues first-hand: we luckily avoided financial catastrophe due to a supportive employer. One of our daughters had a health problem shortly after she was born that required around-the-clock attention at home. Fortunately, my wife had accumulated sick leave at her job, and I was able to transfer some of my accumulated sick leave to her through the federal employees' "leave donation" program. If we hadn't been able to draw on these supports, we would have faced a financial crisis as well as a very scary health crisis for our newborn baby daughter.

Even more challenging, recurring problems have come up involving another daughter who has serious, life-long disabilities. On numerous occasions, she experienced health crises that required my wife or me to pick her up (from school when she was younger, and now, from the apartment where she lives independently) to take her to a hospital or other facility for urgent treatment. It would have been disastrous if we had to worry about losing our jobs or suffering serious income loss just because we had to take substantial time off to be present with our child when she needed our help.

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on low-income families has made this problem especially acute. At the school in a low-income area where our third daughter worked until recently, numerous teachers and other staff members were catching COVID from children who were sent to school even though the kids were infected or ill. Why didn't these kids' families keep them home from school? Because they had low incomes and badly-paying jobs, and they felt they had to send the kids to school because they couldn't take time off from their jobs to stay home and take care of them. Paid family and medical leave would have enabled these low-wage workers to stay home and kept their sick children home from school – and could have reduced the spread of COVID and saved lives.

All workers should be able to count on this kind of support from their employers. Our state needs to step in to address this urgent problem.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable vote on SB 0275.