

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: John H. Bowers

My name is John Bowers. I am a resident of Montgomery County, and a District 14 constituent, and I am also a volunteer Alzheimer’s advocate.

I am fortunate to be represented in the Maryland State Senate by Sen. Craig Zucker (D). I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 275, the Time to Care Act of 2022, which would establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program.

Alzheimer's is a devastating disease that eventually kills. I know this first hand because I lost my mother to Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's affects entire families, not just those that have the disease. And care is expensive! Families may cut back on food, transportation, and medical care to pay for it, or borrow money, or use retirement savings. In Maryland, 1 in 5 unpaid caregivers are providing care for a person with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia.

Paying for these costs is often made even more difficult by the employment consequences for caregivers. In the US, 1 in 6 Alzheimer's caregivers have had to give up their jobs either to become a caregiver, or because their caregiving duties became too burdensome. Among those who continue to work, 57% have had to go to work late, leave early, or take time off because of their caregiving responsibilities. These caregivers need paid family leave.

The Alzheimer’s Association Maryland Chapter stands in full support of SB 275. We provide help, answers and referral to those affected by Alzheimer's disease and dementia. 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. A true paid family and medical leave policy must be cost-effective for workers, employers, and the government with employers contributing at least as much as employees. 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.

Thank you,

John H. Bowers
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