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TESTIMONY ON HB0988 – FAVORABLE
Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Dr. Jeffrey S. Rubin

My name is Jeffrey S. Rubin and I am a resident of District 15, in Potomac. **I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0988, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Modifications.**

As a physician, family caregiver, and cancer patient, I have firsthand experience with the stressful, time-consuming nature of medical care. PFML programs can mitigate some of the challenges that people face when confronting serious illness or other life-changing circumstances in their families, such as the birth or adoption of a child, or the relocation of a spouse in the military. Having the time off from work and financial support to effectively manage these challenging periods is not only important for the family, but for a person's employer as well. This increases the likelihood that people taking leave will be in better health, with a better state of mind, and will return to their jobs where they can resume meeting the needs of their employers. The relative lack of turnover in places that have PFML programs is a well-documented, cost-saving benefit for businesses.

I strongly believe that employees and employers should share equally in the financing of the PFML program, that is, a 50/50 split of the required contributions into the insurance fund. This is consistent with contributions to unemployment insurance programs and reflects the complementary benefits that employees and employers would receive from the PFML program. The fact that small employers are exempt from having to make financial contributions to the insurance fund eliminates a concern that was raised during deliberations last year.

I welcome other provisions in HB0988. It makes sense that the Secretary of Labor would review the status of the insurance fund on a yearly basis and adjust the size of contributions accordingly, while preserving the 50/50 split. This would enable appropriate responses to economic fluctuations and ensure the solvency of the fund over time. Extending the implementation timeline would allow the Department of Labor to develop regulations and obtain the necessary technology to run the program. I appreciate PFML policy experts for proposing additional changes to the bill that passed last year, changes that would further enhance the implementation of the program.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB0988 and resist any weakening amendments.