

Date of Hearing: 3/7/2023

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TESTIMONY ON HB988 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Modifications

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

FROM: Sharon Green

My name is Sharon Green. I am a resident of District 11. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB988, Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Modifications.

Greetings. My name is Sharon Green. I am a teacher/school administrator at Krieger Schechter Day School and a member of Chizuk Amuno Congregation. I am also a wife and mother of two pre-teen children. As someone who has needed family/medical leave, and someone who has spent my years in education working directly with hundreds (thousands?) of families all experiencing the ups and downs of life with the ebbs and flows of needs I know how crucial it is to the safety and security of all children that families are able to stay afloat through the inevitable challenges of life. The whole concept of community is based on support and a safety net that catches us all when we need it because our strength is collective. That is why it is crucial to pass HB988 and ensure that ALL of Maryland's families can have the support they need to make us a stronger state.

Recently my family all got sick with Covid-19 at the same time. It happened despite all of us being vaccinated, and the adults boosted, and wearing masks whenever we left the house. My illness was beyond a "mild cold", I was quite sick for quite a while, and I think that needing to help care for my children while sick may have worsened my condition as I could not rest the way I needed. Prolonged sickness meant more days off of work, and I watched my Paid Time Off disappear before my eyes. Time that I earned through my hard and dedicated work as an educator. Time I was planning to use for a visit to my family later this year. Time I intended to save in case I needed it. It's all gone now, and watching the hours slowly decrease was painful and maddening. But, the truth is, I am lucky to have had any of that time. As my PTO disappeared, and I thought about the money I would now be docked and the future days off I would not be able to take, I felt grateful that I had that time at all. Not everyone does. I felt scared about my loss of income, but the truth is that we will be ok. I am lucky that my husband earns a good wage and that we have a marriage that allows us to easily share our financial

resources. I cannot imagine what catching an illness (or being a caregiver to someone who is sick) would do to a single mom, to someone with an hourly-pay job, to a family not “official” by marriage, or to someone who is living paycheck to paycheck as so many Marylanders are. The number of days I was sick and out of work for another family would mean there was no food, or no medicine, or no diapers, or no telehealth checkups. Bad luck that happened to me could have destroyed my family and left my children hungry and scared. In Maryland in 2023 that is something we have the resources and ability to avoid and so it would be unconscionable to do otherwise. Life is full of things that happen to people through no fault of their own and passing HB988 would go a long way to making sure that no matter who you are or what you do for a living, we Marylanders will lend each other a helping hand. Bills like these represent the potential of the government to help ALL people. Because life happens to all of us.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB988 and resist any weakening amendments. It is something everyone can cheer for and that all constituents of all districts will benefit from. This is what it means to build community.