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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**SB828 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications**

**Senate Finance Committee – March 2, 2023**

**SUPPORT**

**Background: SB828** would modify the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program by clarifying and altering certain provisions relating to the administration of the Program; establishing the employer and employee shares of the total rate of contribution; requiring the State to pay for certain contributions for certain employers and certain covered employees; and more.

**In particular, SB 828 - with sponsor amendments - sets the contribution rate for the program with a cost-sharing split of 50% employees, 50% employers.** This is fundamentally important, as it keeps the program affordable and equitable for both employers and employees.

**Written Comments:** Preserving life and health is a central tenet in Judaism and paramount above all else. This bill piggybacks on the passage of the historic Time to Care Act (2022's SB275), to ensure that Marylanders have access to this crucial program.

Paid family and medical leave benefits everyone. It is an issue that 88% of Marylanders support. Women and people of color are disproportionately impacted when they do not have access to leave, and in too many cases, these groups are forced to leave the labor force to care for their families or personal health, increasing turnover among workers. Studies show that individuals facing a serious medical crisis - like cancer - are better able to make their appointments, complete their treatment, increase their treatment options, and afford their care if they have access to a paid family and medical leave program. When Marylanders are able to take time to care for serious illness, our entire state benefits through increased survivorship and decreased overall health care expenditures.

**With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of SB828 with sponsor amendments to address the cost split for employers and employees.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies, and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*