

TESTIMONY ON SB828
FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE PROGRAM - MODIFICATIONS
Finance Committee
March 2, 2023

TO: Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier , and members of the Committee

FROM: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern and I am testifying in favor of SB828, the Family & Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications, as a resident of Montgomery County's District 16 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda.

The Jewish text that shapes my religious and moral conviction that every employee in the state of Maryland should have access to paid family and medical leave explains that **pikuach nefesh, the saving of a life, supersedes all other commandments**. This assures us that we have a moral obligation to pursue life at any cost. Offering paid leave to employees is an act of pikuach nefesh since it prioritizes people's health and well-being. This is a directive for us to secure the wellness of the labor force, which passing the Time to Care Act can help to do.

I strongly support SB828, which modifies the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program by specifying various aspects of programmatic implementation, administration, and the cost-sharing split.

Passing the Time to Care Act of 2022 last legislative session was a historic victory for all Marylanders - and it was just the first step in realizing Paid Family and Medical Leave in Maryland. The critical work to create and implement an accessible, equitable, and robust FAMLI program is the next major step in fulfilling the promise of the Time to Care Act of 2022, and the General Assembly still has a key role to play in this collective effort. Passing HB 988 will set important parameters for the FAMLI program, putting the program firmly on the path toward successful implementation.

In particular, SB828 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 in Maryland. A 50/50 cost-sharing split is in line with most other states - including our neighboring state of Delaware - that have recently passed FAMLI programs.¹ Maryland passed one of the strongest and most comprehensive FAMLI programs in the country, and establishing a 50/50 cost-sharing split is of the utmost importance to ensure our program centers the needs of both employees and employers, continuing to set the bar as a national model.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB828 with sponsor amendments.

¹ A Better Balance. 2023. Comparative Chart of Paid Family and Medical Leave Laws in the US.
<https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/paid-family-leave-laws-chart/>