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TESTIMONY ON SB#828 - FAVORABLE WITH SPONSOR AMENDMENTS
Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

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

FROM: Michelle Mazurek

My name is Michelle Mazurek, and I am a resident of District 20. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#828, which modifies the Family and Medical Insurance (FAMLI) program by specifying details about the program's implementation and administration. In particular, I urge you to support the sponsor amendments, which make the cost-sharing split 50-50 between employers and employees, putting SB 828 in alignment with the House Bill.

Passing the Time to Care Act in 2022 was a huge victory for Maryland families, but there is more work to do to make sure the program is implemented to be accessible, equitable, and robust, so that this program can fully fulfill its potential. 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 parameter is critical: this cost-sharing split is in line with most other states and will help to ensure that Maryland's FAMLI program is one of the strongest and most comprehensive in the country. A 50-50 split is fair to both employees and employers, both of whom benefit from the program, and keeps it affordable for both.

Currently, my mother-in-law, who lives in Gaithersburg, is suffering from Stage 4 cancer and spent the last month in the hospital; we are thrilled that she was able to move to a rehab just last week and is expected to go home soon. My father-in-law has dropped everything to spend every day with her, supporting her, managing her treatment, and coordinating among dozens of doctors and nurses. He was able to do that because he is (mostly) retired and was able to take leave from the retirement "job" that he is lucky not to need financially. If he had not been able to do that, I do not think her treatment would be going nearly as well.

Our family is not alone – studies show that individuals facing a serious medical crisis - like cancer - are better able to complete their treatment, increase their treatment options, and afford their care if they have access to a FAMLI program. Further, access to FAMLI programs help families to care for aging loved ones in place rather than in nursing homes. The entire state

benefits when Marylanders can take time to care, with increased survivorship, stronger communities, and decreases in overall health care expenditures.

Implementing the FAMLl program equitably and effectively – including the 50/50 employer/employee split – will allow more families like mine to take care of their loved ones, achieving the promise of last year's Time To Care Act. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report, with sponsor amendments, on SB#828**