

Date of Hearing: March 2, 2023

Charles M. Koplik
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TESTIMONY ON SB0828 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

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

FROM: Charles M. Koplik

OPENING: My name is Charles M. Koplik. I am a resident of District 21. I am submitting this testimony in support with the sponsor amendments of SB0828, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications.

I am a member of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) and chair its Anti-Racism Team. In addition, I serve as Executive Vice President of the Jewish Federation of Howard County, and I am a member of Temple Isaiah of Fulton.

In 2008, when my mother at age 91 learned she had uterine cancer, I was needed for a long series of emergencies. There were first the visits to Los Angeles to be part of the meetings with the doctors. Then came the operations and radiation treatment. And finally trips to Los Angeles to support my mother through home hospice care in the final months of her illness and ultimately funeral arrangements and burial in Cleveland. My dad had passed away in 1979. How many families faced with similar emergencies can handle life shattering experiences with demanding employers and the crisis of loss of critical income. Why can we not pool all our resources to create an insurance program that protects workers and young families?

Last session, you passed the Time to Care Act, establishing the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program, which will allow 2.5 million Maryland workers to take paid time off when needed. However, without strengthening legislation, the program could be implemented inequitably, risking unfair contribution rates and potentially harming employees earning less than \$15 per hour. This includes removing the requirement for workers to exhaust all their employer-provided leave before using the FAMLI Program, which will benefit not only employees, but also their employers; codifying a 50/50 split in contribution from employers and employees; covering the costs for Medicaid providers and employees earning less than \$15 per hour; strengthening reporting requirements; and preventing any efforts to weaken the program.

Bills such as this have been effective in many other states and provide an enormously important benefit at a minimal cost to the state, and a very small cost that is shared by employers and workers. By creating a cost-effective insurance program across all businesses in Maryland, everyone can benefit.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB0828 with the sponsor amendments.