

SB 828_ Jo Shifrin_ FAV
Date of Hearing March 2, 2023
Jo Shifrin
Bethesda, MD 20817

TESTIMONY ON SB 828 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Family & Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

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

FROM: Jo Shifrin

My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 828, Family & Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications. I am a resident of Montgomery County and I care deeply about the implementation of this bill. Judaism teaches us to value life and health, to honor our parents, to care for children. It also calls for fair treatment of workers, including the commandment in Deuteronomy 24:14 to “not oppress the hired laborer who is poor and needy.”

The lack of paid family and medical leave has affected me personally:

- In the late 1990s, it became clear that my mother-in-law –who was 86, frail, and diabetic– could no longer live alone. We found a home that could accommodate all of us, but shortly after we moved in, my mother-in-law’s health declined further. Without paid family and medical leave, I could not care for her and keep my full time job. As a result, I left my job to become her caregiver.
- 15 years later, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and chemotherapy rendered me virtually unable to work for several months.

In both these instances paid family and medical leave would have significantly lessened the psychological and financial burdens that I was forced to deal with.

The Time to Care Act was passed in 2022; but now it must be modified so that its implementation is equitable, fair, and just. Changes should include:

- Establishing a 50/50 contribution split between employees and employers
- Removing language that requires employees to use up all of their employer-provided leave before they can use the State program, a hardship for employees and business owners.
- Requiring the State to cover contributions for workers earning less than \$15 an hour, which was the intent of the 2022 legislation.

- Extending the implementation timeline to give the Department of Labor more time to develop regulations and procure technology to run the program.
- Incorporating best practices from other states' experiences, including requiring annual reports on the effectiveness of the program; providing workers the opportunity to file claims in advance of leave when the need is foreseeable; and clarifying that employees cannot receive more than 100% of their wages if they're receiving benefits from multiple sources.

SB 828 would create a stronger program that would attract businesses to our state, generate savings on other tax-funded programs (e.g., SNAP and Medicaid), and improve the health of Maryland's children.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 828 with the sponsor amendments.