

TESTIMONY ON SB 828

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE PROGRAM - MODIFICATIONS

Senate Finance Committee

March 2, 2023

SUPPORT

Submitted by: Dr. Nancy Kunjukunju

Dr. Kunjukunju strongly supports SB 828, which modifies the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program by specifying various aspects of programmatic implementation, administration, and the cost-sharing split.

Dr. Kunjukunju strongly supports the sponsor amendments, which make the cost-sharing split 50-50 between employers and employees, putting SB 828 in the same posture as the House Bill.

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 SB 828 with the sponsor amendments will set important parameters for the FAMLI program, putting the program firmly on the path toward successful implementation.

A strong FAMLI program will undoubtedly improve the health of working Marylanders and their loved ones. As a physician, I've seen time and again how patients benefit from being able to take time off work to care for themselves, a new baby, or an aging loved one. Unfortunately, I've also seen patients struggle from not being able to do so, either because they couldn't forgo their income or because they were afraid of losing their job down the line. It's a shame, because when people are able to take time to recover from an illness or injury, they're more productive and can remain healthier long-term. When women are able to take time at home with a new baby to heal and bond, they are more likely to return to the workforce. Individuals benefit from paid leave, and so do their employers. That's why this legislation is so important.

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 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 most comprehensive FAMLI programs in the country, and this sponsor amendment to create 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.

The research is clear. Paid family and medical leave policies reduce infant mortality and [improve parental mental health](#). They help people facing serious health issues such as cancer [better complete their treatments](#). They help older adults age comfortably at home. We must ensure FAMLI in Maryland is strong and sustainable to achieve these outcomes.

Dr. Kunjukunju appreciates your consideration and strongly urges a favorable report on SB 828 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/>