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TESTIMONY ON SB 485- POSITION: FAVORABLE
Family & Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

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

FROM: Jo Shifrin, on behalf of [Jews United for Justice](https://www.jewsunitedforjustice.org)

My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 485, Family & Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies from across the state in support of social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

I care deeply about the implementation of this bill. Judaism teaches us to value life and health, to honor our parents, and 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 full-time caregiver.
- 15 years later, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and chemotherapy forced me to quit my job and rendered me virtually unable to work for several months.

In both of 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 its implementation must continue to be equitable, fair, and just. SB 485 specifies various aspects of programmatic implementation, including the administration and enforcement of the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program. JUFJ believes that passing SB 485 establishes important administrative parameters for the Department of Labor that will set the program firmly on the path toward successful implementation.

JUFJ is eager for Marylanders to have access to the paid family and medical leave benefits that the FAML I program will provide. However, JUFJ supports the delay proposed in the bill because it gives the Department of Labor the additional time to build the systems necessary to accept contributions, claims, and pay out benefits so that the FAML I program will be both robustly accessible and functional.

SB 485 would create a stronger benefit 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.

We therefore respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 485.