



TO: The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
Delegate Antonio Hayes

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DATE: February 16, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 485 – *Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Modifications*

On behalf of the LifeSpan Network, the Maryland Association of Adult Day Services, and the Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association, we submit this joint letter of **support** for Senate Bill 485.

Our testimony is limited to the extension of the requirement for employers and employees to begin making contributions into the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund as well as the extension for when employees may begin taking the leave. We believe that the extension is necessary to provide additional time for the Maryland Department of Labor to successfully implement the Program. However, we strongly believe that employers, especially those in the health care sector, need a reprieve from the start of this Program.

The health care sector, especially the senior care and post-acute care industry, is continuing to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Low census and higher operating costs brought on by inflation and other factors continue to significantly impact revenues. Recruiting, hiring, and maintaining a strong health care workforce also continues to be a challenge. Under the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program, when an employee is approved for leave, employers in the senior care and post-acute care industry must temporarily replace that employee in order to satisfy certain staffing requirements. At a time when it is difficult to find workers, this provision may exacerbate the staffing crisis and will lead to increased costs through the need to use health staffing agencies. Therefore, we hope that this extension will not only ensure that the Department can effectively and efficiently implement the Program, but it will also provide additional time for the senior care and post-acute care industry to continue to stabilize from the pandemic.