

HB 102_DavidFriedman_FWA
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TESTIMONY ON HB102 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE PROGRAM - REVISIONS

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

FROM: David M. Friedman

My name is David Friedman and I am a resident of Cloverly/Colesville in District 14. While I support HB 102, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Revisions, because the bill makes several necessary technical revisions to Maryland's FMLI program, **I support it only with an amendment removing the additional 18-month implementation delay from the bill.**

Delaying implementation will harm hundreds of thousands of families, caretakers, service members, and Marylanders going through a medical crisis. According to the latest actuarial study commissioned by the Maryland Department of Labor, it's anticipated that the FMLI program will receive over 165,000 claims in its first year, just shy of 14,000 claims a month.¹ Consequently, an 18-month delay in implementation means that over 247,000 Marylanders, who would have had access to paid leave if the program was implemented on time, will instead have to make impossible choices between caring for themselves and their loved ones or maintaining their income and paying their bills. During my career as a Federal employee, I was fortunate to have adequate paid leave available to me when family members faced medical challenges. When my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer 19 years ago, I was able to spend cherished time with her in Florida every month during the nine months leading up to her death. I cannot imagine what I would have lost if I had not been able to do that without paid leave and supportive managers and strongly believe that further delay in implementation of FMLI is unwarranted. It would be an unconscionable almost six years between passage of the Time to Care Act of 2022 and delivery of initial benefits.

As it stands, the FMLI program has already been delayed twice, and each year the implementation gets further delayed, other states pass and implement their own FMLI programs, leaving Marylanders behind. Three states that passed paid leave legislation after Maryland – Delaware, Minnesota, and Maine – will fully implement their programs before Maryland does, and none of these states are delaying their implementation due to "federal uncertainty." Life's joys and tragedies don't wait, and it's a broken promise to ask hardworking Marylanders to delay their ability to care for themselves and their families. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a Favorable With Amendments report on HB 102, with an amendment that removes the delay provisions in the legislation.**

¹ The Jacob Institute, University of Baltimore. 2024. *Maryland Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Phase II: Analysis of Expected Program Claims and Administration Expense*.
<https://www.jacobfrance.org/wp-content/uploads/Phase-II-Final-Report-for-Task-2-01312024.pdf>