

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT ON HB 102 FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE PROGRAM – REVISIONS

Senate Finance Committee
April 4, 2025

My name is Kyle Long and I am a resident of District 43. I support HB 102, which would make several technical revisions to the state's Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program, **but I support HB 102 only with an amendment removing the implementation delay. I do not support the additional 18-month delay in HB 102, and respectfully request this provision be removed.**

Delaying implementation of the FAMLI program 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 FAMLI 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.

I am a social worker working with families across Baltimore City and know that this program would be a great benefit now to many families that I work with. Due to lack of supportive programs at the federal level, many families do not have paid leave protections through their work. I work with many families that are not currently paid if they need to take time off to grieve the loss of a family member, care for their newborn or support a sick relative. Those families are stuck in the unwinnable position of choosing between caring for themselves or their families or keeping their jobs. When folks aren't able to keep their jobs, there are many cascading factors such as them falling behind on their rent and experiencing housing instability. Families deserve not to have to make the challenging choice between stability and caring for people that they love.

Extending the time Marylanders must wait to access paid leave hurts our state's economy, and leaves Marylanders behind. Every day the implementation of FAMLI is delayed, Maryland families needlessly fall into poverty without access to paid leave. When families have nowhere else to turn for support, Maryland will bear these costs through spending in our state's safety-net programs. As it stands, the FAMLI program has already been delayed twice, and each year the programmatic implementation gets further delayed, other states pass and implement their own FAMLI 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.

Members of my community are eager to access this critical program they have waited for, and further implementation delays are untenable. **I urge the committee to issue a Favorable with Amendments report on HB 102, with amendments that remove the delay provisions in the legislation. Thank you.**

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>

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