

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

Senate Finance Committee

April 4, 2025

My name is Linda Bergofsky and I am a resident of District 15. 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. 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.

In 1997, I was the sole breadwinner in my household and worked for a Fortune 500 company that did not allow employees to take time off to care for sick family members. I had 10 days of vacation, which I used to care for my sick mother in Florida. She was eventually diagnosed with an incurable cancer. I had no choice but to take FMLA, which allowed me to be with my mother when she died, but I received no pay for almost 2 months. Had FAMLI been in place, I would have earned at least some amount of paid leave to use.

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.**

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