

Oppose Delays to Paid Family Leave Implementation

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Normally, I'd write testimony on behalf of another organization, but I wanted to take the time to write this letter as an individual Maryland resident.

Like millions of workers in this country, I have no guaranteed paid family leave. My employer is pretty understanding and accommodating, but to be clear, all I have that legally protects me if I need to take family or medical leave is 12 unpaid weeks of Federal FMLA time. While better than nothing, 12 unpaid weeks of leave is really more of a promise that your job will be there when you get back than an actual leave program. Your bills and expenses don't pause for 12 weeks.

My wife and I want kids. We've wanted kids for years. None of that has changed with your decision. The only thing that has changed is our future financial security. I cannot tell you how deeply disappointing it is to see the General Assembly fold on this issue again. Every delay in implementation is not a clever political move meant to save the program from tough times, but adds to the number of people who never got to see the benefits of FAMILI but will pay in for the rest of their lives.

My rough napkin math calculations estimate that I will personally pay more than \$17,000 into the FAMILI program over the next 35 years of work, assuming current earnings and projected employee contribution rate. That doesn't even include what employers will contribute to this program on my behalf. So even if my family were granted the leave promised by the program, it's not like we wouldn't still be net contributors.

Despite all of this, I am proud to contribute to this program. I know that it will be there for others when they need it most. I am proud to know this money will help keep families safe and healthy. I wish this program was there for me and my family when we needed it. I would be lying if I told you this did not make me bitter.

There will always be another reason to consider delaying implementation of this program. Every couple of years, I spend my time convincing other people to make a plan to vote for the candidates that will deliver the most for them. It's days like this where it becomes harder to believe that's possible. In 2022, I was proud to tell people which candidates supported paid family leave. By 2028, when workers finally get access to this right, it will be harder to tell who actually supported it. How are we supposed to believe certain politicians can solve problems for us, when they can't even implement protections considered commonplace in nearly every other country in the world? What seems to be delaying implementation is not lack of understanding of how to set the program up but the willingness to start charging people and businesses for its upkeep. I hope you make the right decision, but don't expect you to.