Testimony - HB 102, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Revisions
Unfavorable - In Opposition
Senate Finance Committee
April 4, 2025

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Honorable Chairwoman Beidle & Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SEIU Local 500, as one of Maryland's largest public sector unions representing over 23,000 workers—including childcare workers, educators, higher education professionals, and other public service workers are united in our firm opposition to House Bill 102 as currently amended, specifically due to the inclusion of an unnecessary and harmful 18-month delay in the implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program.

In 2022, Maryland made history with the passage of the Time to Care Act. That moment marked the culmination of years of work by working families, labor unions, and advocates to secure what so many Marylanders have long needed: the ability to take paid time off to care for themselves or loved ones without facing economic ruin. HB 102 threatens to undo that promise by needlessly postponing the program's rollout, denying urgently needed benefits to hundreds of thousands of working people across the state.

We represent frontline workers who have kept Maryland running through a pandemic and beyond. These are the very people who will be most harmed by this delay—those who are one medical emergency or childbirth away from having to choose between their health and their livelihood. An 18-month delay could mean more than 240,000 workers missing out on critical paid leave benefits during that time. That is unacceptable.

The Maryland Department of Labor has publicly reported being on track for contributions to begin in mid-2025, with benefit payouts slated to begin in 2026 under the current statute. The rationale for an 18-month delay—purportedly due to "federal uncertainty"—simply does not hold. The FAMLI program does not rely on federal funding. No other state with similar programs has justified delays on these grounds, and states like Delaware, Minnesota, and Maine—who passed their laws after Maryland—are on pace to implement ahead of us.

Every day this program is delayed is another day working families are forced to bear the cost of illness, childbirth, or caregiving alone. According to the Urban Institute, the FAMLI program has the power to reduce poverty by 22% among participating families and could save the state $28 million in safety net expenditures. Delaying implementation undermines those economic and human benefits.

As a union dedicated to dignity, equity, and justice for all workers, SEIU Local 500 cannot support a policy that moves Maryland backwards. The delay in HB 102 breaks faith with our members and all those who advocated for a stronger, more just workplace.

We urge the Committee to amend House Bill 102 by removing the implementation delay and keeping Maryland on course to deliver on the promise of paid family and medical leave. Maryland workers have waited long enough. Let’s not make them wait even longer.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maryland’s working families.

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