



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Unfavorable

Senate Bill 260—Family Bereavement Act
Senate Finance Committee

Thursday, February 13, 2020

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 4,500 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth for Maryland businesses, employees and families. Through our work, we seek to maintain a balance in the relationship between employers and employees within the State through the establishment of policies that promote fairness and ease restrictive burdens.

Senate Bill 260 would require employers to provide leave with pay for bereavement in the event of the death of an immediate family member or a pet of the employee.

The Chamber is concerned over the possible implications of this legislation for several reasons. First, most employees are already able to utilize vacation or paid time off (PTO) for personal reasons, which would include time off for bereavement. As well, we are concerned that the statute would allow employees to use sick leave for bereavement. This would be inconsistent and in conflict with the existing sick leave statute, which lists very specific reasons for the use of sick leave.

Additionally, employers already face tremendous challenges with respect to the ability to verify reasons presented for PTO. This is further complicated by the fact that, unlike with humans, there is no ability to verify the death of a pet. Additionally, qualifying pets are not defined by the bill, leaving the possibility open for employees to request bereavement leave for the death of a goldfish or snake.

Most employers already provide paid time off (PTO) which permits an employee to use leave to cover an absence, including those connected to bereavement. Employers should be allowed the flexibility to determine the terms that best fit their needs based on any number of factors.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **Unfavorable Report** on Senate Bill 260, as presented.