

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D
Legislative District 43
Baltimore City

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Chair

Joint Committee on Ending
Homelessness

Chair

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 102
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3145 · 301-858-3145
800-492-7122 Ext. 3145
Mary.Washington@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB260: Labor and Employment – Leave with Pay -- Bereavement Leave
(Family Bereavement Act)
February 13, 2020
Finance Committee**

Madame Chair, Vice Chair and members of the Finance Committee:

In the state of Maryland we have done an admirable job establishing definitions for types of leave. Current statute allows for leave for a personal illness or to take care of an ill family member, but there is nowhere in current statute that codifies bereavement as a qualified leave category.

SB260, The Family Bereavement Act, simply codifies “bereavement” as a form of leave under the current leave statute. This legislation **does not mandate leave, extend leave or add leave**, it simply recognizes bereavement as a *permissible* form of leave. This bill would in no way change or affect any leave policies that employers may or may not currently offer. It simply would make bereavement a recognized form of leave at workplaces that already offer leave to their employees.

And to be very clear, SB260 does not impede on or distract from the *Maryland Sick & Safe* or the *Time to Care Acts* because the legislation would fall under the existing Maryland Flexible Leave Act which already provides paid leave to its employees and prohibit the employer from taking action against an employee who exercises the rights granted under this provision.

Why is Bereavement Leave Important?

Research by the NIH, the American Psychiatric and Psychological Associations, and numerous experts in the field of human services recognize that when an individual experiences a loss of a loved one, they undergo differing levels of trauma associated with that loss. And without proper time for acclimation, individuals can experience damage to their mental health and other long-term negative effects. The effects of trauma experienced may exacerbate or lead to substance abuse, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, relationship issues etc.

Bereavement leave, just as other forms of leave, provides needed time to recover from incidents in life that would otherwise impede a person's capability of fully performing their employment responsibilities and preventing further negative impacts.

- The Society for Human Resource Management has acknowledged that Individuals need time without the stress and obligations of their employment to handle the affairs surrounding the loss of a loved one. It can be a full time job dealing with a funeral, settling an estate, handling a loved one's personal effects etc.
- Mourning a loss can cause focus and concentration issues, inability to handle stress, time management – all things that can negatively impact job performance and performance evaluation.
- Allowing for proper bereavement leave can only benefit employers -- employees will return more focused, which ultimately promotes a more productive employee.
- For many individuals, pets are loved ones and for some their only loved ones or only real family. This bill would allow employees to take bereavement leave for the death of their pet.

In conclusion, providing clarity in the law, by codifying "bereavement" as a leave type, would ultimately benefit both the individual and the employer. Therefore I urge a favorable report on SB260.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Senator Mary Washington,
District 43