

February 11, 2020

Senator Mary Washington, District 43
11 Bladen Street, Room 102
Annapolis, MD 21401


Dear Senator Washington:

As the Manager of Bereavement Services for Gilchrist, I am aware of the invaluable impact of counseling and support for people who are anticipating or surviving the death of a loved one. Grief, whether anticipated or unexpected, can metaphorically take you out at the knees. Evidence shows grief can profoundly inhibit one's social, emotional and physical capacity. Gilchrist is the largest not for profit organization in the state that provides hospice, elder medical care, and counseling and support services to help people and their families at every stage of end of life care to live life to the fullest and make informed choices about their care. Since 1994, the organization has served hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout Central Maryland – in homes, skilled nursing and residential care communities and at three inpatient hospice centers in Baltimore County, Howard County, and Baltimore City.

Approximately 94% of U.S. employers offer paid bereavement leave through a separate policy or as part of a paid time off or paid sick time plan. However, that length of time varies often being 1-3 days which is not enough time to safely or effectively deal with the death of a loved one. The emotional and physiological changes that occur affect one's ability to carry out their daily activities of living. While at the same time that grieving person has to take care of the financial, legal and logistical implications that accompany death. Sufficient paid bereavement leave can promote a productive and empathetic workplace because it gives employees time to grieve.

An established bereavement policy will support an employee's physical and mental health. This improved health will aid a business by avoiding physical injuries and poor decision-making that occur due to grief. The Grief Recovery Institute reports that **85 percent of management-level employees described their decision-making as "very poor" to "fair"** in the weeks or months following a grief incident that affected them. Over 90 percent of those in physical jobs reported a much higher incidence of physical injuries, due to reduced concentration, in the weeks or months following the grief incident. Grief support and adequate leave during a period of bereavement can help to eliminate these types of on-the-job mistakes.

According to research by Talent Smart, the ability to manage emotions and mental stress has a direct link to performance. As a Forbes publication stated, taking time off to disconnect from work is effective in coping with mental stress. It's clear that a grieving employee will not be able to achieve



optimal performance. Thus, the best way to regain productivity is to allow the employee the time off he or she needs to grieve the death of a loved one's life.

On behalf of Gilchrist, I fully support Bill SB260, Family Bereavement Act.

Thank you,



Robin Contino
Manager of Bereavement Services
Gilchrist