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Testimony in Support of SB 539 “Labor and Employment - Family and Medical  
Leave Insurance Program - Establishment”  
Submitted to the Senate Finance Committee  
February 27, 2020

Mr. Chairman; Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee – thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jayson Williams. I’m the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of MD Strategic Consulting, a Prince George’s County based communications and public affairs firm. I come here before you today in support SB 539 as a businessman and from a place of both compassion and competitiveness.

When my partner and I started our small business, we wanted to create a workplace culture that values our employees. Less than two years after starting the company, one of our vice presidents reached out to let us know she was pregnant with their second child and wanted to take the first three months off after she gave birth. She was a very dedicated member of the team and even offered to take the time unpaid. We did not think that was right and made the decision that we were going to offer paid family leave. We couldn’t afford to pay her regular salary, but we arranged to continue her pay at a portion of her salary during the time that she was out of the office. We knew it was the right thing to do.

Then, just last year, another employee needed time away because, within a short period of time, both of his parents, who live in Ohio, were diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s Disease. Our company gave him paid family leave so he could go visit them, make caregiving arrangements, and work out legal and medical issues with his siblings.

Here’s what I know from nearly five years in business: offering good benefits helps any business recruit and retain better employees. But, if the state administered a program like the one we’re talking about today, it would help small businesses like mine. In some ways, I can’t compete with corporations that are larger than me. So, the way I take care of my employees is extremely important to me, to our company culture, and to the growth and success of our business. I can’t give out big bonuses, but I can take care of the people that have taken care of me and helped us grow.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.