



# Maryland Commission on Caregiving

## *“The Voice of the Caregiver”*

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February 27, 2020

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley  
Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairwoman Kelley,

The Maryland Commission on Caregiving is pleased to submit **this letter of support for SB539 “Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment”** also known as the “Time to Care Act.” This bill would establish a Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program through which employees may take up to 12 weeks of paid leave from their jobs to care for new children, other family members<sup>1</sup> with serious health conditions or disabilities, or themselves. The proposed legislation results from the efforts made by the members of the 2016 Task Force to Study Family and Medical Leave Insurance which took careful consideration, research, and substantial input from relevant stakeholders when issuing its report and recommendations.

Supervised by the State Department of Labor and administered by the Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI), this program would establish an insurance pool funded by a modest 50/50 contribution of both employers and employees and offer temporary wage replacement during the leave period ranging from \$50 to \$1000 per week. This is based on the employee’s weekly wage and the State’s average weekly wage with low-income employees receiving up to 90% of their weekly pay. It would also protect employees from retaliation from their employer in the form of discharge, discrimination or an adverse action.

Serving as “the voice of the Maryland caregiver,” the Maryland Commission on Caregiving is charged with recommending policies that positively impact family caregivers, soliciting and responding to their concerns and acknowledging their contributions. Family caregivers provide the majority of care and financial support for their loved ones who are unable to care for themselves due to an illness, injury or disability. The passage of SB539 would better support

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of “family member” mirrors the definition in the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act of 2017 and includes: a child, parent, spouse, grandparent, grandchild, or sibling. (Adoptive, foster, guardianship, in loco parentis, and step-relationships are included in these categories.)

Maryland's family caregivers by providing them with financial support and job protection in a time of need.

In 2014, there were an estimated 547,000 informal caregivers in the State of Maryland who provided an estimated 587 hours of caregiving services. The role is typically unpaid, and requires a great deal of physical, emotional, and financial sacrifice. The economic value of this unpaid care was estimated to be about \$5.8 billion.<sup>i</sup> The passage of SB539 would provide employees who take on these roles with some compensation to allow them to provide adequate care to themselves and their loved ones with diminished financial impact. Furthermore, it would align Maryland with eight other states and the District of Columbia which have already passed similar Family and Medical Leave Insurance Programs and solidify its place as a caregiver-supportive state.<sup>ii</sup>

The Maryland Commission on Caregiving works to ensure that caregivers across the lifespan are equipped with the resources needed to provide safe care to their loved ones across the state of Maryland. Passage of SB539 would support such efforts which is why the Commission respectfully urges a favorable report.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Eastman, Chair  
Maryland Commission on Caregiving

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<sup>i</sup> Caregiving Across the States: 50 State Profiles (3014). State of the States in Family Caregiver Support. Retrieved from <https://www.caregiver.org/caregiving-across-states-50-state-profiles-2014>

<sup>ii</sup> Comparative Chart of Paid Family and Medical Leave Laws in the United States. A Better Balance. Retrieved from <https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/paid-family-leave-laws-chart/>