

**Senate Bill 539
Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program –
Establishment**

Senate Finance Committee
February 27, 2020

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 539, which provides wage replacement for Maryland workers who need to take time to care for themselves or a loved one.

Inspired by the gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of Marylanders each year, and an employer of over 2,000 people, we recognize the dignity of the worker and as part of that the need to take time to care for oneself and loved ones.

Each day, Catholic Charities staff interact with Marylanders facing challenges and difficulties. Whether it is a parent seeking job training, a youth experiencing a behavioral crisis or a senior who needs a safe place to live we work to meet the individual's needs and help them meet their goals. It is through these interactions that we have come to strongly support SB 539. The examples below illustrate our experiences.

- One client participated in our Families for Success program. She had been working as a home health aide making a wage that supported her but did not leave much leftover each month. When she became pregnant, she continued to work despite feeling unwell. Finally in her 6th month of pregnancy, her doctor told her she could no longer perform the strenuous activities required for her job. Her employer was unable to provide a reasonable accommodation and she did not have access to paid family leave. She lost her job. Despite numerous interviews she could not find a position that met her doctor's requirement and would take a chance on a visibly pregnant woman. She spent the remainder of her pregnancy receiving Temporary Cash Assistance to get by.
- Another client sought admission to our nursing home – St. Elizabeth's. Her daughter had been caring for her and could no longer handle the stress of balancing work and caregiving duties for a parent with dementia. She did not have access to paid family leave. During the admission process, the daughter suffered a heart attack. There was little doubt that the stress from the juggling act had contributed to her condition.
- We worked with a family whose adolescent son was experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Despite a recommendation for residential treatment from his medical team, his parents are battled their insurance company while they waited for an available bed in an appropriate setting. Their son could not be left home alone, his school made it clear he was not welcome back, and childcare providers refused to watch him. His parents were forced to take unpaid leave adding great financial stress to the family during an incredibly stressful period.

Paid family leave would not solve the larger problems these families were facing, but it would have provided each family with time to care – time to care for themselves and their families – as they faced adversity.

On behalf of these three families and all the individuals we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 539.

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy