

February 27, 2020

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB539

Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment

TO: Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and the members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Laura Richman

My name is Laura Richman. I live in Ellicott City in District 9A. This testimony is in support of SB539.

The problem of taking leave for family health obligations is particularly acute in my mind because I recently dealt with managing the palliative care, and ultimately the death, of a very elderly parent who lived in another state. I was fortunate that I was able to do so without jeopardizing my income and financial stability, but for some people this would not have been at all possible.

Not every employee has the luxury of telling their employer that they will be out for a few days, weeks, or months, especially if they work on an hourly basis, or for minimum wage. They shouldn't have to fear job loss because they have family or personal health and well-being obligations or needs that cannot be avoided. In fact, in many instances, people's jobs are terminated for just those reasons, which is cruel and unfair. I want my neighbors and all the employees with whom I interact at local businesses to be able to take necessary time off without going into debt or risking job loss.

Rabbi Hillel, one of the greatest of Judaism's formative leaders, sages, and scholars, taught that we cannot separate ourselves from our community and that we all bear responsibility for each other's well-being and care. I agree with Hillel that we must make sure that all people are able to take time to be with their families and attend to their own and their family members' health.

I respectfully urge a favorable report for SB539.