

Hearing Testimony February 27, 2020
Senate Finance Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC

SB 539– Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment

SUPPORT

My name is Dolly Kildee. As a paraeducator in Montgomery County Public Schools, I was an active member of SEIU Local 500 for twenty years, and after my retirement assisted in establishing a Retirees Council for Local 500. I'm here today to testify in support of SB 539 – the Time to Care Act.

Some decades ago, my mother-in-law moved in with my three children, my husband and me. Mrs. Kildee had multiple chronic health conditions, among them dementia. At that time I was not in the paid workforce and became her primary caregiver. This involved help with acts of daily living, doctors' visits, medication management and more. I know firsthand of the resources used in caring for a parent, resources that include time, money and social support, among others.

In 2015 my husband of 52 years was diagnosed with cancer. Through many setbacks, Brian fought this disease aggressively. When our children were with him during chemo, before and after surgery or during a procedure, he was worried that they were missing work. Such worries used energy that could have been directed toward healing. There was a large discrepancy between prognosis and reality, and unfortunately less than four months elapsed between diagnosis and death. For that reason, we did not have time to address the need for extended time off from work. But had we had that time and had any of my children been able to avail themselves of it, it would have afforded him a bit more peace of mind.

When I first thought about testifying at this hearing I became tied up in the details, in the interest of transparency and honesty. Envisioning a future health crisis, not a fun exercise, that would require my children taking time away from their jobs. Assessing the specifics – a child who lives in Maryland and works in DC, another who lives in DC and works in Maryland. Working to discern if I could speak to how I, as a retired Maryland state tax payer, could potentially benefit from this law.

I don't know if I personally would benefit from this law, and I hope I never have to find out. That is not the issue. The issue is that a family going through a health crisis is a family in need. This benefit would provide a much needed and appreciated resource, at a time when it is needed most. I strongly urge this committee to support SB 539 and give this bill a favorable committee report.

Respectfully submitted,
Dolly Kildee
SEIU Local 500