



Senate Finance Committee

Testimony in Support

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

February 27, 2020

By: Ken Capone

Hello committee members. My name is Ken Capone. I am the Public Policy Director for People On the Go which is Maryland's statewide self-advocacy organization. We are here to testify in support of SB539 - the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program.

As many you are probably aware, nearly all of us will need to take leave at some point, whether to care for a family member's or our own serious medical condition or disability, or the joyous occasion of welcoming a new child. Without access to paid leave, workers often face a difficult and unnecessary decision, health and family, or work and making ends meet. Not now but in the past, my mother had to take off work to care for me if I got sick or my support needs intensified, or even longer when I had surgery, I know it was a hardship for us. It would have been nice to have something like this back then.

More than 70% of family members caring for a person with Intellectual and or Developmental Disabilities report that caregiving interfered with their work and the odds of an employee losing income increases by 48% if the person lives with a child with disabilities and by 29% if the person lives with and supports an adult with disabilities. That is a significant amount of people experiencing economic hardship. When people having access to dedicated paid family leave, it reduces the odds of losing income by 30%.

As more people with intellectual and or developmental disabilities are supported to work, these additional benefits are important. People with disabilities need leave for the same reasons as all other workers and in the US addressing one's own health condition or disability makes up 55% of all leave taken. People with disabilities are more likely to be employed in low-wage, part-time jobs that provide fewer supports. Access to paid leave increases opportunities for people with disabilities so that we can be supported when needs intensify Just like I did from time to time. The benefits to people with disabilities and their families are clear. Both the person that is sick and the person that is caring for them have time they need to be together and get or give support. They will be less stressed which in turn speeds up the healing process. In conclusion, SB539 gives people with disabilities the comfort of knowing that they shouldn't feel guilty anymore because they may need extra care from a family member from time to time and it won't be a hardship on the family.

We concur with the testimony provided by The Arc of Maryland in that the provisions of this legislation need to come into compliance with established FMLA regulations; as well as the provisions outlined within the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act (sick and safe leave). Finally, we strongly believe that if the state wants to pass this legislation - which our leadership wholeheartedly supports - there must be funding for developmental disabilities supports and services so that we can be compliant with the legislation as it is intended.