

My name is Aaron Seyedian, I live in Montgomery County, and I'm the owner of Well-Paid Maids, a living-wage home cleaning company that operates in the DC area. As a small business owner who employs and serves Marylanders, I am eager to see paid family and medical leave enacted in our state. After having provided paid family and medical leave to my employees for over three years, I can tell you that in addition to being moral, logical, and practical, that paid leave is affordable and beneficial to businesses.

First things first, let's talk cost. As this bill is debated one thing everybody should know is that what we are talking about is not expensive. I have dozens of different costs that I am constantly trying to control as a business owner but paid leave is not one of them. It doesn't even rate. I don't stress about it. I don't even feel it. My business participates in the DC Paid Family and Medical Leave program, which is entirely employer-paid, and it costs me .62% of payroll. Given the fiscal projections for this bill, and the structure of splitting it between employees and the employer, I would not let anybody convince you that this proposal is anything but affordable.

And before we leave the topic of cost, let me just say that for two of the three years that I provided paid leave, the public program we participated in did not exist. I used to purchase private short-term disability insurance on the open market and the cost was 3x as high as what I pay now for a worse plan, meaning skimpier wage replacement and no family leave. So please know that the private sector alternatives to a public social insurance program are inferior and more costly for business owners.

To recap, this is cheap. But it's not just cheap, it's a deal, because as a business owner you get so much bang for your buck. My employees do hard work. Bending, scrubbing, lugging, scraping – you name it. If someone gets injured or gets sick, I need them to rest for every single day the doctor recommended in order for them to be able to come back safely.

Now, we have a generous paid time off policy – 20 days per year – but PTO does not and cannot cut it. There are so many illnesses and injuries and life events that we know just take longer. So by being able to use paid family and medical leave, my employees can actually take the time they need when it's a situation that would otherwise be financially impossible for me cover via PTO or one that they'd try to work through, risking their health and safety, ruining their job performance, and increasing the likelihood that they'd quit.

To sum it up, paid family and medical leave is a negligible cost for businesses that provides tremendous benefits. And I'm not the only business owner who thinks so, which is why Amalgamated Bank, Ace Hardware Stores, Red Canoe Café, Atwater's, Zeke's Coffee, and the Mayson-Dixon Company have also sent in letters of support.

In closing, I would be skeptical of any business or business group that claims this proposal is burdensome for employers. In fact, what's burdensome, not just for employers, but employees and the community, is not having a state program.