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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB375/SB211**

**Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment  
(Time to Care Act of 2021)**

**TO:** Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee  
**FROM:** Jessica Friedman

My name is Jessica Friedman. I am a resident of Baltimore and District 43. I'm also a new mother, a family physician who cares for people experiencing homelessness, and a Jew. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 375, the Time to Care Act of 2021.

My daughter, Dora, was born in December 2020. In the years that I've dreamed of motherhood, I've imagined having several months at home with my newborn. As a physician, I know that this time is vital: to recover from the many changes the body undergoes in pregnancy and labor, to establish breastfeeding, and to bond with a baby. In recent years, physicians and midwives have begun referring to the 12 weeks after birth as the "fourth trimester," recognizing the importance of this time period for both parents and children. So, when I became pregnant with Dora, I hoped to be home with her for at least 12 weeks before returning to work.

Unfortunately, neither my husband nor I qualified for our employers' paid parental leave programs, and I do not qualify for protected unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. I am grateful that my workplace recognizes the critical nature of the fourth trimester and is allowing me to take six weeks of unpaid leave beyond the six weeks of short-term disability I was granted. We are privileged as a family to be able to afford this financially. As I write this, Dora is seven weeks old, and I continue to navigate the very common challenges of difficulty breastfeeding, pelvic pain, sleep deprivation, and mood swings. I cannot imagine returning to work right now without compromising my health, Dora's health, or the quality of medical care I provide. I worry about the physical, mental, and financial health of the many parents in our state (and their children) who do not have the economic resources I have and must return to work at or before six weeks postpartum.

The Time to Care Act provides financial means for parents to spend the entire fourth trimester caring for their infants and themselves. From a Jewish perspective, this epitomizes protecting life and health (*pikuach nefesh*) and fair treatment of workers (*lo ta'ashok sachir*). Moreover, in distributing the responsibility of paying for the Family and Medical Leave Insurance fund to all

employers and employees, it recognizes the importance of community (*kehillah*) in making those values a reality.

With my daughter, my neighbors, and my patients in mind, I urge you to favorably report HB 375, to vote for it, and to advocate for it with your colleagues.