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THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0375/SB0211

**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 Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Jo Shifrin, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Jo Shifrin. I live in Bethesda in District 16 and I am writing on behalf of Jews United for Justice in support of HB375/SB211, the Time to Care Act. JUFJ organizes more than 5,500 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice.

The lack of paid family and medical leave has impacted my husband and me twice in the last 22 years. In 1998, we discovered that my husband's mother, who was 86 years old, living alone, and diabetic, could not manage herself or her home. Shortly thereafter, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. She was adamant about not wanting to move to an assisted living community or a nursing home. So we found a house that could be adapted for two families, and moved the 3 of us into it. Her health began to quickly decline and I realized that I couldn't continue to work full-time. My employer didn't have a paid family and medical leave policy, so I was forced to leave the paid workforce and became a full time caregiver. We were very fortunate that my husband had a good paying job and we were able to take care of my mother-in-law and all of our bills. However, I am very aware that many are not that fortunate and have to make a decision between working to pay their bills and taking care of themselves or a loved one.

Fifteen years later, I was working as an independent contractor when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. The chemotherapy I received every two weeks made me sick for the first 11 or 12 days, so that it was nearly impossible for me to work for several months. A paid family and medical leave law would have reduced a great deal of the stress associated with being sick by lessening the financial burden.

At the same time I was dealing with my breast cancer, a single mother who lived nearby was suffering with the same diagnosis. She continued to work through her treatment because she didn't have the support she needed to take time off from work. Consequently, she never had the chance to rest and recover. A few months later, as I was getting back on my feet and returning to work, I learned that she had died. I wonder if things might have been different for her if she had had access to paid family and medical leave.

Nearly every one of us will face a situation where we need to take off an extended period of time from work, whether to bond with a new child, take care of a loved one whose health is in peril, or take care of ourselves when an unexpected injury or illness strikes. Please make 2021 the year in which we pass the Time to Care Act and finally recognize the universal needs of Maryland workers.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB211.