

Bill: House Bill 375

Title: Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2021)

Committee: House Economic Matters Committee

Date: February 16, 2021

Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

I strongly support HB 375, the Time to Care Act. I write as a person who has spent her professional career working within the Maryland General Assembly in various roles, a resident of District 17 in Montgomery County, and a new mother.

It is time for Maryland to implement a paid family leave program. This pandemic has smashed wide open any cracks that existed in the country's and state's lack of support for working families. There are many vulnerabilities that have been exposed and brought to the forefront of conversation – which is great – yet the lack of paid family leave has been noted consistently for many years prior to this crisis.

By the grace of a kind and supportive boss, I was able to take an appropriate amount of time after the birth of my daughter to recover from labor and delivery and bond with my newborn. Regardless of my good fortune, women and families should not have to be at the whim of their employers. My husband works for a large company and was promised four weeks of paid parental leave, to be taken within the first six months. However, three months before our daughter was born, the company unilaterally and without notice changed their policy to one week. He found out when he contacted his HR department on the day our daughter was born. Upon the announcement of a pregnancy, one of the first things my friends and I discuss is how much leave the – typically mother only – is able to access. I will tell you that it varies drastically among industries and different areas of the state.

I ask any parent to think back to when their child(ren) was born. How difficult those first few weeks and months were. What an adjustment to a new life revolving around feeding and sleep, or the lack thereof. How needed and *medically necessary* time to rest and recover from childbirth was. Beyond the multitude of new parents who would benefit from this program, the Time to Care Act would honestly likely touch every single person in the state. Our parents are aging rapidly and living longer, thus necessitating more expensive and often unattainable care at the end of their life. What about caring for a family member unable to care for themselves? Families face an impossible choice in such a situation. The stress of a decision between starting a family or caring for a family member and a job and paycheck is cruel and unfair. Yet the solution is outlined in HB 375.

Maryland has the opportunity to show the rest of the nation that working families are a priority and the foundation for a healthy and functional economy. On behalf of my young family, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 375, the Time to Care Act.

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