



Hearing Testimony February 16 2021

House Economic Matters Committee

Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC

HB 375 Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment

SUPPORT

SEIU Local 500 is made up of over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D. C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, faculty and staff at institutions of higher education, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. Our members have been on the front lines since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is why today we submit this testimony in favor of House Bill 375 The Time to Care Act. SEIU Local 500 believes that every Marylander deserves the time to care for new babies, aging parents, and loved ones with disabilities or other health needs.

We believe that caring for a family member is a basic responsibility we all share, not a privilege reserved for only those who can afford to do so. Everyone, from part-time workers to full-time employees and management, deserves dignity when balancing the responsibilities of work and family. Yet many Marylanders cannot take time to care because they lack paid family leave. Unpaid leave forces too many Marylanders to choose between income and family. If passed, HB 375 will alleviate an already stressful situation of our residents.

The coronavirus pandemic has only served to exacerbate already existing racial, ethnic, economic and gender inequalities. These inequalities further erode the financial stability of Maryland's working families. According to the Center for American Progress, Low-wage workers and workers of color are less likely than higher-wage and white workers to have access to paid leave. Communities of color are already feeling the economic and emotional strain from the pandemic. The lack of paid family and medical leave only deepens the impact.

Additionally, even before the pandemic started, polling done by Opinion Works has found that nearly 80% of voters in Maryland support this legislation even after they are told about the minimal contribution from workers. It is supported by a vast majority of Marylanders, and if passed, all Marylanders will benefit.

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President**

Members of the Senate Finance Committee, we can do better! Let's make sure all working Marylanders are able to contribute to the economy while at the same time give them the paid time off to care for their families. We ask for your support for HB 375 and strongly urge a favorable committee report!

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