

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure the budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and well-being.

Economic Matters Committee

HB 375 – Labor and Employment – Family Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2021) Support

February 16, 2021

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC) is a consortium of Maryland organizations and individuals formed in 1996 to promote meaningful child welfare reform. As HB 375 establishes the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program which would allow Maryland's workers to access wage replacement when they need to take time off to care for themselves or a family member, CPMC urges a favorable report on this bill.¹

Preparing Maryland for a prosperous future begins with recognizing that our youngest residents must get what they need today to become the adults who will strengthen our communities and build our economy. Fortunately, what our children need is not a mystery. Recent advances in the science of early childhood development tell us that the early years are a time when the brain is literally building itself from the ground up, in much the way a house is constructed. And, it is the relationships and experiences children have early in life that are the building blocks for the skills they need to remain healthy, and to succeed in school, in relationships, and in the workforce. **When children have stable, responsive relationships with caring adults at home and in the community, they get off to a good start with a strong foundation to become healthy, productive and caring members of our communities.**

Paid family leave allows parents to create those responsive relationships – whether it is with a biological child, an adopted child or a foster child. In all three instances, it is imperative that a strong bond form in those early days promoting attachment. Additionally, research has shown that paid family leave reduces cases of abusive head injuries in children under the age of 2.² A 2016 study published in *Injury Prevention* examined California's paid family leave program. It compared California's data against other states including Maryland's as it related to deliberately inflicted head injuries. This type of head injury is most prevalent between the ages of 9 and 20 weeks. The research team determined that "strengthening the bond of the parent-child relationship by spending time together is the best way to prevent child abuse."³

For those reasons stated above we urge a favorable committee report on HB 375.

¹ The following members have signed onto this testimony: Advocates for Children and Youth, Associated Catholic Charities, Board of Childcare, Child Justice, Inc., Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates, The Family Tree, Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, Diana Philip, the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect.

² "Stopping Child Abuse: Paid Family Leave Reduced the Number of Child Abuse Cases in California." *Medical Daily*. By Justin Caba. 25 February 2016. Accessed at <https://www.medicaldaily.com/paid-family-leave-stopping-child-abuse-375161>.

³ Ibid.