

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
HB 375 - Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2021)
Position: Favorable

Chair Davis and Vice Chair Dumais

The Alzheimer's Association writes to issue its strong support for HB 375, legislation which establishes a family and medical leave insurance program.

This legislation provides temporary benefits to a covered individual who is taking leave from employment; establishes the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund; requires, beginning January 1, 2022, certain employees, employers, and self-employed individuals to pay certain contributions; authorizes, beginning July 1, 2023, a covered individual taking certain leave from employment to submit a claim for benefits; and authorizes the establishment of private employer plans; etc.

Unpaid family leave can create hardships and disincentives for many working families. Taking unpaid leave for caregiving duties can be costly, which often results in reduced work hours. As a result, family caregivers of working age may turn to retirement savings to support their everyday needs and to help defray caregiving expenses, which can also affect future economic security.

In addition to the financial hardships associated with unpaid leave, there is also a need for paid leave that can be used for family caregiving. For many years, the focus of the paid leave debate has been in the context of maternity leave, but paid leave can be used for much more than maternity leave. Providing workers with some type of paid family leave for caregiving may be the single most important policy for employers to consider when designing a caregiver-friendly workplace. However, the majority of private-sector paid leave is currently limited to parental leave to bond with a newborn or adopted child.

This limited view of family caregiving runs counter to today's family roles and composition. For example, almost three in four millennial family caregivers are employed and provide care for an adult with a disability or an older adult with chronic care needs. About 22 percent of millennial caregivers provide care for a grandparent, but grandparents are generally not considered qualifying family members under employer-sponsored PFL policies. Paid family leave policies should recognize the evolving definition of "family" and allow employees to provide care for those that they consider family.

We urge a favorable report on this legislation