



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Unfavorable

Senate Bill 473—Family Bereavement Act
Senate Finance Committee

Thursday, February 11, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 5,000 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families. Through our work, we seek to maintain a balance in the relationship between employers and employees within the State through the establishment of policies that promote fairness and ease restrictive burdens.

Senate Bill 473 would require employers to provide leave with pay for bereavement in the event of the death of an immediate family member, the death of a child (including adopted, biological, or foster children, stepchildren, or a legal ward), or to use leave with pay to take care of an immediate family member who is ill.

The Chamber is concerned over the possible implications of this legislation for several reasons. First, most employees are already given the option to use vacation or paid time off (PTO) for personal reasons (which is inclusive of time off for bereavement). In addition, we are concerned that the bill would allow employees to use sick leave for bereavement. This would conflict with the current sick leave statute, which includes specific reasons to use sick leave, as well as add confusion to the distinction between the two options.

The Chamber also wishes to highlight that employers face challenges regarding verifying reasons for the use of PTO. It is difficult to verify each individual reason for usage, especially with a sensitive topic such as the passing of a loved one. As a result, abuse of such a system that lacks the proper verification would negatively impact the employer.

Most employers already provide PTO which permits an employee to use leave to cover an absence, including those connected to bereavement. Employers should be allowed the flexibility and autonomy to determine the terms that best fit their needs and their business based on a range of factors.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **Unfavorable Report** on Senate Bill 473, as presented.

