mhamd
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND

Heaver Plaza
1301 York Road, #505
Lutherville, MD 21093
phone 443.901.1550
fax 443.901.0038
www.mhamd.org

Senate Bill 211 Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment
(Time to Care Act of 2021)
Senate Finance Committee
January 28, 2021
Position: Support

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is the state's only volunteer, nonprofit citizen's organization that brings together consumers, families, professionals, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and mental illness. We appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 211.

SB 211 seeks to establish a Family and Medical Leave Insurance program which would entitle employees to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave from work in order to care for themselves, new children, or other family members with serious health conditions or disabilities. The program would also provide wage replacement during the period of leave, drawn from a fund pool into which employers and employees contribute.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that one in five Americans will experience a mental illness in a given year, and one in five children, "either currently or at some point during their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness."[1] The COVID-19 pandemic is only further taxing the mental and behavioral health of many Marylanders: the Baltimore Sun has reported that around 40% of Marylanders have experienced anxiety or depression as a result of the pandemic, and Black and Brown communities have endured disproportionately higher rates of job loss and higher infection and mortality rates due to COVID-19.[2] An August report by the CDC states, " younger adults, racial/ethnic minorities, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers reported having experienced disproportionately worse mental health outcomes, increased substance use, and elevated suicidal ideation."[3]

Allowing Maryland workers time to care for themselves and their families during long-term mental or behavioral health treatment or recovery is critical to supporting a strong economy. The

---

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018. https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm

[2] Wenger, Y., Sept. 29, 2020. *As coronavirus rolls on in Maryland, mental health toll surges, with experts fearing spike in suicides.* https://www.baltimoresun.com/features/bs-hs-mental-health-covid-20200929-yzjfdfc2ijb4vab7o3v4g7q25a-story.html

[3] Czeisler MÉ , Lane RI, Petrosky E, et al. Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:1049–1057. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6932a1external icon

For more information contact:
Margo Quinlan, Director of Youth & Older Adult Policy: 410-236-5488 / mquinlan@mhamd.org

Maryland Department of Health has cited[4] studies which indicate that depression and anxiety disorders alone cost the global economy $1 trillion annually in lost productivity.[5] At a time when our national economy is weathering one of the worst public health crisis of a generation, it is increasingly critical that we support a healthy and sustainable Maryland workforce.

For these reasons, the Mental Health Association of Maryland supports the Time to Care Act and urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 211.

---

[4] Maryland Department of Health. *Mental Health Promotion.*
https://health.maryland.gov/suicideprevention/Pages/Mental-Health-Promotion.aspx#:~:text=Data%20from%20the%20Substance%20Abuse,by%20the%20state%20Mental%20Health
[5] The Ripple Effect of Mental Illness. *National Alliance on Mental Illness.* https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/NAMI-Impact-Ripple-Effect-FINAL.pdf