



To: The Honorable Chair, Senator Delores Kelley, and members of the Finance Committee
From: Melissa S. Rock, Interim Managing Director & Director, Birth to Three Strategic Initiative
Re: **SB 211: Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2021)**
Date: January 28, 2021
Position: **SUPPORT**

Extensive research has been developed that shows how critical the first three months are for the development of a baby's brain.¹ In fact, 85% of a person's brain development happens in a baby's first three years. A strong attachment to a caretaker ensures that this brain development stays on track even for young children experiencing the toxic stress that living in poverty causes. Yet too often, economic realities prevent parents from opting to stay home with their newborn rather than immediately returning to work post-partum. These early years are also a critical time for parents to learn to care for their child, a transition that is often difficult and stressful even when the parent can stay home. Balancing work and parenthood, especially in those first few months, causes stress and anxiety for parent and child alike, and interrupts the critical bonding period.

According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, "In Maryland, there is an 11% gap in labor force participation between men and women, in part because the United States lacks family friendly policies."² (Internal citations omitted.) The COVID-19 pandemic caused such significant financial hardship on Maryland's families that between November 25, 2020 and December 21, 2020, almost half of Maryland's families reported barely being able to pay for their usual household expenses in the previous week.³ Without paid leave, there is no way these families can afford to miss work, even when their families members need them most.

It is important to note that the bill is written inclusively, as there are many situations in which a parent may need to take time to welcome or care for a child. This includes not just birth and adoption but also foster placement and informal care placement. Ensuring a welcoming and secure transition into a new home for an older child, who often will be coming from a traumatic situation, is critical for providing the stable support that will help the child transition and succeed in his or her new home. **Senate Bill 211 would ensure that parents can afford to take the time they need to focus on their child, when that child needs them most. We urge a favorable report.**

¹ <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/204-the-child-development-case-for-a-national-paid-family-and-medical-leave-program>

² <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f9877a3f28da201f50f6006/t/5fa1ae7439a10f3d57d410bb/1604431477070/Paid-Leave-Means-Maryland.pdf>

³ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/10896-adults-living-in-households-with-children-who-had-difficulty-paying-for-usual-household-expenses-in-the-past-week?loc=22&loc=2#detailed/2/22/false/2047,2042,2034,2033,2032,2028,2027,2002/any/21185>