



**Testimony on SB211**  
***Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2021)***  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Ms. Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Given the need to provide family and medical leave to hardworking employees in Maryland, we are supportive of HB0375- Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2021).

The current family and medical leave systems in Maryland are broken and the pandemic has worsened the status quo. No person should have to choose between caring for an aging family member with COVID-19 and paying their electricity bill. No person should have to worry about how to afford the next meal while healing from a traumatic medical experience. Unfortunately, unpaid leave forces too many Marylanders, especially those whose needs are the greatest, to choose between income and family, as well as self needs. Employees are often reduced to dangerously balancing limited days off and pressing family and medical needs particularly with families that have children. Establishing a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program would ease the burden of taking time off work for urgent needs. At an estimated employee payroll dedication of \$3 to \$6 a week, the cost of the program is minimal, but the benefits are plenty. Now is the time to establish security for families and medical leave, particularly while we deal with a deadly pandemic.

For 1199SEIU members who are our everyday healthcare workers fighting on the frontlines of COVID-19, this Act is vital to help them manage treating the hundreds of thousands that are sick in this state, while also maintaining their very sanity and livelihoods at the workplace. We must remember that despite healthcare workers being our heroes during this pandemic, they are people as well and they need paid leave to juggle the everyday struggles and realities of life. Not only would this Act help our members during this pandemic, but it would also create a fallback system for all future emergency family and medical needs for workers.

For this reason, we believe that this Act will create the necessary structure in place to improve overall family and medical leave structure in Maryland and ask that you support the Time to Care Act of 2021.

Respectfully,

Ricarra Jones  
Maryland/DC Political Director  
1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers- East  
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