



Montgomery County Young Democrats Testimony to Senate Finance Committee in Support of SB 211-Time to Care Act-Paid Family and Medical Leave 1/28/2021

Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman, members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for receiving our testimony. We are an organization of young Democrats ages 14-34 who are working to make Montgomery County and Maryland better places to live, with freedom, opportunity, and justice for all. Our testimony is in support of SB 211 (the Time to Care Act of 2021), sponsored by Senator Hayes, which would establish paid family leave for Maryland workers.

The Time to Care Act is a welcome and long overdue piece of legislation. It would establish a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program that would provide benefits for Maryland workers who are taking leave from their jobs. Workers would have partial wage replacement for up to twelve weeks away from work so they can care for their newly born child, or sick or disabled family members, or care for themselves if they have a serious health condition.

The bill works as follows: Employers and employees would each contribute a small amount from each paycheck, an 0.75% mandatory contribution of each payroll. The State Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program would administer this fund, and Marylanders will apply for the benefit when they need to take leave from work for the birth, adoption, or fostering of a new child, for illness, or for caring for themselves or a loved one. Benefits would be approved for up to twelve weeks for eligible Marylanders. The payments would range from \$50 to \$1,000 per week, depending on a person's income. Lost wages are not replaced dollar for dollar, but lower wage workers will receive a higher percentage of their income.

Currently Marylanders, especially Marylanders who work in low wage jobs, are frequently caught between their work and their family responsibilities. Often they have to work at the expense of their health, and when sick workers are at their jobs, diseases can easily spread

from person to person. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how paid family and medical leave is badly needed, from moral, financial, and public health standpoints.

This proposal will benefit everyone. It will ensure: 1) Maryland workers can afford to care for their family members when they need to, 2) these benefits will help companies recruit and retain employees, and improve morale and increase productivity in the workplace, 3) help the state government and taxpayers through reduced Medicaid spending, less reliance on social services, and fewer people needing unemployed benefits, and 4) prevent the spread of diseases, including COVID-19, and improve public health.

People should not be forced to choose between the jobs they need to survive and taking care of their family members-especially during a pandemic. Over 40 million Americans provide unpaid care for their family members and relatives each year, and most of them have to juggle caregiving and their work schedules. When workers can't get paid family leave, they can't bond with their children, they often miss critical doctors' appointments, their family members get sick and suffer alone, and families face financial hardship. In recent years nine states and the District of Columbia have enacted paid family leave; Maryland should follow in their footsteps and be the tenth state.

Paid family leave is also extremely popular. An overwhelming majority of Marylanders support the creation of a paid family and medical leave program. The Maryland General Assembly should lead the way and pass the Time to Care Act to benefit workers and families, and show that you care about family values.

The Montgomery County Young Democrats urge you to favorably report SB 211, vote for it, and ask your colleagues to vote for it as well.

Please contact us at mocoyoungdems@gmail.com or michaeldelong94@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Michael DeLong, President
Teresa Woorman, Vice President
Stephen Schiavone, Treasurer
Kathleen Bender, Political Advocacy Director
Keyna Anyiam, Membership Director
Margie Delao, Communications Director
Steven Cename, Secretary