

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1322  
Primary and Secondary Education - School Personnel - Prohibition on Retaliation for Not  
Returning to In-Person Instruction and Work  
Ways & Means  
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Greeting Honorable Members of the House Ways & Means Committee. My name is Kristy Trueblood and I am an elementary school teacher in the Howard County Public School System(HCPSS) and a member of the Howard County Education Association(HCEA). Today, I am providing written testimony in support of HB 1322, a bill that will provide necessary ADA protections for many educators like me.

Beyond being a proud Maryland educator, I am also the mother of a cancer survivor. In 2018, while I was on maternity leave, three weeks after the birth of my daughter, my five year old son was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. He underwent treatment at Hopkins for two and a half years, completing treatment in November of 2020. During those two and a half years, he had over 40 rounds of IV chemotherapy, 19 surgical procedures, and roughly 800 total days of chemo. He remains immunocompromised, and we are waiting for his levels to recover so he can begin the process of being completely revaccinated.

I filed for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) to protect my son, at the direction of his oncology team at Hopkins, with a plan to return to my instructional building approximately two weeks after receiving my second COVID vaccine. During the last several weeks, I have had to search far and wide for a vaccine on my own through means outside of HCPSS. I attempted, with the help of HCEA, to get answers from the school system and human resources as to what leave I needed to take, and questions I needed answered about my personal situation. It was three weeks before I was able to speak with anyone. This was after going through HR, the community superintendent, the assistant community superintendent, and the Board of Education. The day that I finally got an opportunity to speak with HR I filed my FMLA paperwork, as I was counseled to do. That was almost three weeks ago.

At this time, I still have received no approval or no request for more information. I have been informed that they haven't had time to process the request and that I am virtual until further notice. However, the actual reality is that I am planning for every possible scenario at this point, working fully virtual, intermittent leave, full FMLA, and also planning for a sub to take over my class while I also plan my own lessons with no knowledge of whether I am working from one day to the next. Needless to say, I am unsure of what the future holds.



Many people in my situation have already been through financial hardships, issues with health care, and mental trauma. Educators were forced to return to instructional buildings with no plan for ensuring a vaccination or plan beforehand. As a teacher, I am required to accommodate each of my student's extenuating circumstances to ensure equity. I would hope that the governing body, the Maryland State Department of Education and county level school personnel would extend that same level of respect. It is paramount that local school systems individually review extenuating health circumstances of their employees to find an equitable solution for staff.

Understanding that many of my colleagues have extenuating health circumstances like mine, **I humbly ask that this committee vote favorably on HB 1322.**