



Testimony in Support of HB 496

Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment

TO: Hon. Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Kayla Mock, Political Organizer

United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Chair Wilson and members of the House Economic Committee, I appreciate the chance to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, working on the front lines of the ongoing pandemic in grocery, retail, food distribution, law enforcement, and healthcare. Through collective bargaining, our members raise the workplace standards of wages, benefits, safety, and retirement for all workers.

We strong support HB 496 and urge this committee to vote it favorably.

The Time to Care Act will help address the economic hardship, stress, and other burdens that happen when caring for newborns, loved ones with health conditions, or yourself. No Marylander should have to choose between the job they need and caring for their loved ones or their own health.

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This ongoing pandemic has put so much stress on already burdened working families. Workers have been forced to choose between going to work and providing for their families or staying home and caring for their families. I have seen grocery store employees crying in the back room because they could not be home with their sick kids – it's heartbreaking.

This is not a partisan issue – an OpinionWorks study conducted from December 15, 2021-January 10, 2022, showed overwhelming support for paid family leave in Maryland that crosses all partisan and geographic lines. Results showed 88% of Maryland voters specifically favor creation of “a family and medical leave insurance program that would provide workers with partial wage replacement for up to 12 weeks when they need time away from work to care for a new child, seriously ill family member, or their own serious health condition.”

A true paid family and medical leave policy must be cost-effective for workers, employers, and the government with employers contributing at least as much as employees. We must ensure that our paid family and medical leave program covers all working people, applies equally to everyone, covers all the well-established reasons people need leave, reflects an inclusive definition of family, and provides up to 12 weeks of leave and job security.

On behalf of our members and all of Marylanders, we urge a favorable report from this committee on HB 496.