

MomsRising.org

Testimony in Support of HB 8 “Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022)”

House Economic Matters Committee

February 15, 2022

FAVORABLE

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

FROM: Ruth Martin, Senior Vice President, MomsRising

Nothing should keep you from caring for a loved one battling cancer, being with a parent nearing their final days, or bonding with a new baby. The lack of paid family and medical leave forces too many working Marylanders to make the impossible choices between dealing with our own serious medical issues, or being with the family who needs us or being at work to be able to support that family. And that impossible choice is also hurting not just our families, but also our economy. Lack of access to paid family and medical leave is part of what is pushing record numbers of women, and in particular women and moms of color, out of the workforce, increasing workforce shortages right as we’re battling inflation across the nation.

The need for paid family and medical leave is urgent. Right now, only 23% of workers in the United States have access to paid leave through their employers.² This means that most families end up cobbling together some combination of vacation time and sick days and then cross their fingers that nothing goes wrong and that they’ll be able to make ends meet.

Families like Nathan’s from Silver Spring who told us that *“I live paycheck to paycheck, I can’t go without a paycheck - I have a pre-existing medical condition. I work on the frontline at an Urgent Care Office, I am concerned about catching the virus.”*

Nathan’s family cannot afford for him to miss even a day at work, but with a pre-existing condition and providing care as an essential worker at an urgent care facility, Nathan is concerned about what getting Covid would mean for his family’s financial stability.

HB 8 - The Time to Care Act, is an insurance program that will help address the economic hardship, stress, and other burdens that come into play when caring for new babies, loved ones with serious health conditions, or yourself. Employees’ ability to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave will help Maryland families meet their caregiving, employment, and financial needs and commitments while caring for their family. Marylanders need comprehensive paid family and medical leave!

February 5th marks the 29th anniversary of the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The FMLA is an important law that has helped millions of families; and while we celebrate this milestone in workforce history, it was always meant to be the first step. Our UNPAID national family and medical leave laws are stuck in 1993 and haven’t evolved to meet the needs of today’s working families!

This is why, MomsRising, on behalf of our over 30,000 Maryland members, urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 8.

¹ Schools turn to parents for help as omicron surge causes staff shortages Retrieved from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/schools-turn-parents-omicron-surge-staff-shortages/story?id=82200214>

² Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2021 Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2021/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2021.pdf>

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