



SEIU Maryland & DC State Council

1410 Bush Street, Suite F, Baltimore, MD 21230

Testimony in FAVOR of HB 496
Labor and Employment – Family & Medical Leave Insurance Program –
Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022)

House Economic Matters Committee
February 15, 2022
1:00 PM

Presented to: C.T. Wilson, Chairman
By: Terry Cavanagh, SEIU

We urge a FAVORABLE Report on HB 496.

SEIU is the largest union in North America. We unite workers in health care, public service, including public education, and property services to improve lives and the services we provide. We represent over 50,000 workers in the Maryland/DC/Virginia region. Many of our members are poorly paid, but essential, and especially vulnerable if they fall victim to illness or need to be away from work to care for a family member.

The Time to Care Act, would provide stability to the lives of workers, their families, their communities and to their employers. This can be done at a cost shared by workers and employers for a very reasonable amount of money, especially when compared to the benefits it would provide to workers who otherwise, might have their economic lives turned upside down. The bill would also lessen the fear that families face if wage earners became seriously ill.

It would provide an opportunity for new parents to have the precious time to spend nurturing new-born or newly adopted members of their families without fear of putting their families in dire financial straits.

Some employers already provide this benefit. Most do not. Many would provide it if we were able to get the costs down to a reasonable amount. With this bill, we do that, but in order to keep the costs down, we need everyone in the pool.

As a union of many low-wage workers, we heartily endorse the provisions that recognize the special needs of low-wage workers with higher wage replacement percentages and a sliding scale of contributions. This allows even the lowest wage workers to fully participate in this program. Our union includes many part-time workers. For many, this may include multiple part-time jobs, or a full-time and a part-time job. This bill recognizes the modern economy where we no longer have one full-time, long-term, job per family with living wages and benefits.

Our neighbor, the District of Columbia, passed similar legislation a couple of years ago. There was one major difference. The DC law requires employers to pay the full cost of the program. In an effort to work with employers, our coalition has taken the significant step of crafting a bill that requires a 50/50 split between workers and employers, in order to literally meet employers halfway.

Besides DC, many others have taken this step to protect workers income in case of serious illness or to nurture a new-born child or care for an ailing parent. Thus far, nine states have enacted similar legislation. Our competitors across the world have also long recognized the need for this approach.

This approach is popular. The results of polling by Opinion Works, a highly respected public opinion research company, has shown that this legislation has broad support across all parts of Maryland and all political stripes.

This bill has been carefully studied over the past two years and changes have been made to address the concerns of stakeholders. Now is the time to care and now is the time to get this done.

We ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT ON HOUSE BILL HB 496. Thank you.