



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**House Bill HB0496 - Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program -
Establishment
Economic Matters Committee – February 15, 2022
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB0496 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment. This bill will establish an insurance fund pool beginning January 1, 2023, to provide up to twelve weeks of paid leave to an individual who is taking leave to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, a family member with a serious health condition, themselves if they have a serious health condition, or a military service member who is next-of-kin or has a specified need because of the military deployment of a family member. Benefits range up to 90 percent of the employee's average weekly wage, depending on the employee's income. Each employee and each employer that employs 15 or more employees must contribute to the insurance fund in equal and sufficient amounts to fund and administer the program (not to exceed 1 percent of an employee's wages). A self-employed individual has the option to participate. A covered individual may submit a claim beginning July 1, 2024. The fund will be administered by the State Department of Labor, through the newly established Division of Family and Medical Leave Insurance.

Passage of this bill will ensure that all working Marylanders can afford to take leave when they need time to care for family members or themselves. Unpaid leave for many families translates to women oftentimes not taking the leave they are entitled to take. Nearly 25 percent of women take 10 or fewer days of their unpaid parental leave because they simply cannot afford to go without pay. Although all employees are covered, this bill will exempt small businesses with fewer than 15 employees from making payments into the insurance fund, thereby reducing the financial impact on these businesses.

WDC has a particular interest in this bill because women make up nearly 50 percent of Maryland's labor force, and by and large, are the individuals in our society who take the primary caretaking role for our families – a role so critical that our society cannot function without it. In 76 percent of Maryland households with children, all parents have paying jobs. Further, 80 percent of Black mothers, 51 percent of Latina mothers, and 50 percent of White mothers in Maryland are the breadwinners for their families. Simply stated: paid family and medical leave in Maryland will mean an employee will not have to choose between their job and family, employers will help keep qualified workers in the labor force, and employee turnover will be reduced.

WDC has been following a similar bill very closely and submitting testimony in support of paid family leave for the past three years. **We ask for your support for HB0496 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President