

**Testimony Regarding S.B. 275, Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program
– Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022),
Submitted to the record of the Finance Committee Hearing on February 10, 2022
by Chief Kenneth Gattis-Antolik**

Testimony in Favor

I am Chief of Police in Berwyn Heights and member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a network of 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors across the U.S. – including over 50 in Maryland – who promote evidence-based solutions that prepare kids for successful lives and steer them away from crime.

I write in support of S.B. 275, the establishment of a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program in Maryland.

The proposed plan would help to ensure that Maryland families are strong and financially stable from the first days of an infant’s life. Studies show that state paid family leave programs can help low-income mothers retain employment, reduce parents’ reliance on other forms of public assistance, and significantly reduce a family’s chance of living in poverty, which is a risk factor for crime.

I’ve seen firsthand the way that struggling new parents and their infants can succumb to poverty and stressors, which adversely impacts the children and their parents in the long run. I know that it’s important in the early days for parents to set up routines, to care for their baby and themselves, and to begin the process of bonding with their baby, which helps make sure a child develops in a healthy way. As it stands, many parents in Maryland do not have ample opportunity to make these early connections without taking a serious financial hit, which some families simply cannot afford or which causes excessive stress, which is not healthy for their newborns.

I also support S.B. 275 because I worry about the impact that adverse childhood experiences have on kids’ trajectories. Paid family leave may help reduce maternal depression and stress, and even prevent child abuse and neglect. Research shows that depressed mothers attend to their young children less and are more likely to use corporal punishment and to perpetrate child abuse and neglect. We know this behavior can have long-term effects on public safety, as children who experience maltreatment are significantly more likely to commit a crime by their teenage years and end up in the backseat of one of my officer’s cars.

In summary, I support S.B. 275 because it will help ensure that Maryland’s families, especially at-risk families, have the support they need to successfully raise a child in their first year of life. And it will ensure a more secure and safe future for the next generation in this state.