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TESTIMONY ON HB0496 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

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

FROM: Ioana Stoica

My name is Ioana Stoica. I am a resident of District 21. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0496, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program.

I just gave birth in late December to my first child, a beautiful baby boy who was born early due to medical complications. Because of these complications, I had taken off the prior two weeks from work, and landed back in the hospital again a week postpartum. Eight weeks later, I am still fortunate to be home with my baby, bonding with him during a most critical development period. I am able to do this because I work in Washington, DC, which has established paid family leave for their workers.

It is unconscionable that my family, friends, and neighbors who work in Maryland cannot afford to take this time to bond with their newborns, or to take time to care for their ill and even dying family members, because of loss of income. After my traumatic birth experience, I cannot even imagine having to go back into work a week or two later. The Time to Care Act 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.

Despite being one of the most affluent countries in the world, the US is one of only a handful to not offer any parental or paid family leave to workers. Until the US Congress acts to address this issue at the national level, it is imperative that our state act to ensure that Maryland workers do not suffer undue economic hardship when caring for loved ones.

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. HB0496 has all of these key components of a meaningful paid family and medical leave program, and **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0496.**

Thank you,

Ioana Stoica