

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 Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: John H Bowers

My name is John Bowers. I am a resident of Montgomery County, a District 14 constituent, and I am also a volunteer Alzheimer's advocate.

I am fortunate to be represented on the House Economic Matters Committee by Del. Pam Queen (D). I am submitting this testimony **in support** of HB 8, the Time to Care Act of 2022, which would establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program.

Alzheimer's is a devastating disease that eventually kills. Alzheimer's affects entire families, not just those that have the disease. And care is expensive! Families may cut back on food, transportation, and medical care to pay for it, or borrow money, or use retirement savings. In Maryland, 1 in 5 unpaid caregivers are providing care for a person with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.

When my father's fall down the stairs landed him in the hospital, my mother's advancing cognitive impairment made it difficult for her to grasp what had happened. Making decisions was overwhelming for her. She needed help to navigate through the medical developments of my father's hopeful recovery, and to gently manage her daily routine at home. My brother, sister, and I all lived and worked great distances from my parents. We played 'tag-team' for the next month. That we could take extended time off from our jobs to travel to their home, because we all had paid family leave from our employers, was truly a godsend.

Sadly, my parents' life together, in the small midwestern city they had enjoyed for over 40 years, would soon end; after almost 3 weeks, my father died. And I lost my mother seven years later, from Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer's Association Maryland Chapter stands in full support of HB 8. We provide help, answers and referral to those affected by Alzheimer's disease and dementia. The Time to Care Act would go a long way towards addressing Maryland's caregiving inequities. Many employers in Maryland offer no paid family or medical leave, or any paid leave at all, for that matter. It would enable workers to take leave with partial pay for the birth or adoption of a child, for a family member's serious health conditions, or for their own well-being and respite. 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.

No Marylander should have to choose between the job they need and the family they love when a medical crisis strikes or a new child is welcomed into the home, which is why we need comprehensive paid family and medical leave in Maryland. A true paid family and medical leave policy must be cost-effective for workers, employers, and the government with employers contributing at least as much as employees.

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. HB 8 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 HB 8.

Thank you,

John H. Bowers
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