



**Hearing Testimony February 15, 2022
House Economic Matters Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC**

House Bill 496 – Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment

SUPPORT

My name is Monika Roberts, and I am testifying on behalf of myself and my fellow members at SEIU Local 500. SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in the region including support staff at Montgomery County Public School, Family Child Care Providers, faculty and staff at institutions of higher education, staff at non-profits, and many other working people across the region. As a School Administrative Secretary at MCPS, I'm here today to share with you my support and SEIU's support of HB 496 The Time to Care Act from my perspective as a mother, a union member, and a senior citizen. SEIU Local 500 thanks Chairman Wilson, Delegates Valderrama and Kelly for their leadership on this important issue.

Four years ago, I became ill and required life-saving surgery along with a difficult recovery period. I can testify to how important it is to be able to have your child or loved one able to take the time from work to take care of you. My daughter, Patty, was with me every step of the way. She was able to stay at home and take care of me, as well as sit at the hospital and take me back and forth to doctor appointments. She did this regardless of the financial burden or the strain it put on her family. She did this because I am her mother and that was the end of that.

In 2018, complications from the surgery three years before became another lifesaving event. By this time, I had retired and was living on a very tight retiree budget. I was concerned about copays, hospital stays, my daily cost of living. My daughter Patty was with me again. I was again as before concerned over the time I was taking her away from work, the threat to her and her family's financial state. She spent so much time

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driving me back and forth to doctors, sitting at hospitals and just the extreme weight of the situation we were in opened the door for worry. The freedom or ability to put the financial expense to the side and be able to be there for the family member in need is sometimes all a person can handle.

To be honest, I was concerned about sharing my story with you. I was concerned if you would really listen and understand what I was telling you about my story? Thinking about my future health and the possibility of another health crisis, I find myself extremely scared. Assessing the specifics – a child who wants to take care of her mother, but the financial burden to do so is not only frightening but lends itself to a feeling of helplessness. What if I become so ill where I need help around the clock? How can I ask my daughter to take time from her work and put that financial burden on her to take care of me when she already has a family? No Marylander should have to choose between a paycheck and caring for a family member. The issue is that when a family goes through a health crisis, it is not just only a crisis for the ill person, it is also a crisis for the family who wants to provide the much-needed support and resources. It is a family crisis.

Passing the Time to Care Act would provide the support and resources at the time when the family needs it the most. **SEIU Local 500 respectfully requests that you support HB 496 and strongly urge a favorable committee report.**

Monika Roberts
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