

Date of Hearing: February 15, 2022

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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: Charles M. Koplik

My name is Charles Koplik. I am a resident of District 33. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0496, Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment.

In 2008, when my mother at age 91 learned she had uterine cancer, I was needed for a long series of emergencies. There were first the visits to Los Angeles to be part of the meetings with the doctors. Then came the operations and radiation treatment. And finally trips to Los Angeles to support my mother through home hospice care in the final months of her illness and ultimately funeral arrangements and burial in Cleveland. My dad had passed away in 1979. How many families faced with similar emergencies can handle life shattering experiences with demanding employers and the crisis of loss of critical income. Why can we not pool all our resources to create an insurance program that protects workers and young families?

To be effective, the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program must include well-established reasons people need leave, including caring for a new child by birth, adoption, or foster, caring for a family member with a serious health condition or disability, caring for one's own serious health condition, and for needs resulting from a military family member's deployment. The program should offer 12 weeks of paid leave to all working Marylanders with an inclusive definition of family, and a 50/50 split in contribution from employers and employees. Low-income workers must be provided a larger percentage of their income to make it affordable for them to take the time. All workers must also be protected against adverse consequences, particularly job loss, for taking leave.

The Time to Care Coalition includes more than 150 organizations and businesses and the proposed bill is supported by 88% of Maryland voters.

Bills such as this have been effective in many other states and provide an enormously important benefit at a minimal cost to the state, and a very small cost that is shared by employers and workers. By creating a cost-effective insurance program across all businesses in Maryland, everyone can benefit. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0496.**