



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

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

House Economic Matters Committee, February 15, 2022

SUPPORT

As an addiction medicine physician, I often see individuals seeking treatment for a substance use disorder who face an impossible decision: engage in much-needed medical care while sacrificing income and potentially even losing their employment, or continue to work while trying to face their addiction on their own. The escalation of overdose deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic, in all states and involving substances ranging from prescription opioids to cocaine to fentanyl, reinforces the urgent need to American workers to have access to Paid Family & Medical leave as part of a multi-pronged approach to support individuals on their road to recovery.

Fear of job loss inhibits many individuals from seeking care in the first place. Then, inability to afford adequate unpaid time away from work interferes with an individual’s ability to remain engaged in treatment for their substance use disorder. For many individuals without paid medical leave, the support of family, who might drive them to treatment or become caregivers for their children, is pivotal; paid family leave would facilitate that essential family involvement without which some of our patients would not be able to engage in their addiction treatment.

From a moral, practical, and economic perspective, paid family & medical leave is a policy with great potential to benefit the health of the increasing number of Marylanders with substance use disorders. Therefore, we respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 496, establishing a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program.

Respectfully,

Natalie Spicyn, MD, MHS

Member, Public Policy Committee
