



**Support of HB 496
Labor and Employment –
Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment
February 15, 2022
Favorable**

February 15, 2022

Dear Chair Wilson and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in strong support of House Bill 496. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders. We urge you to support this legislation that guarantees a paid family and medical leave insurance fund. While the United States is the only industrialized country that does not mandate paid family leave, nine other states such as New York, California, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia have enacted [policies](#) to provide paid leave to employees. It is clear that the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act alone does not suffice as a solution, but requires complementary state legislation.

Paid family leave should not be viewed as a privilege amongst economically developed countries and progressive states, but a right for our Maryland citizens, especially in the midst of a pandemic that has taken over 400,000 lives across the US. The refusal to pass policies for paid family and medical leave is an explicit declaration from elected legislators, that Marylanders who have compromised health or individuals who are managing family responsibilities and demands will not be protected; single mothers in particular during the pandemic have experienced this strain. Many face the possibility of losing the ability to pay for basic needs if they need to take leave to support themselves or their families.

HB 496 encompasses all Marylanders, including self-employed individuals, employees of small business, and employees earning lower wages and thus will receive benefits and job protection through the [FAMLI program](#). According to evidence from the [Maryland Center on Economic Policy](#), “Most businesses in states that today offer paid leave report positive or neutral impacts on their bottom line” and find that “businesses fare well when workers can take paid leave because it increases likelihood that workers would return to the same employer, potentially

info@strongfuturemd.org

PO Box 164 | Arnold MD 21012

240-643-0024 | strongfuturemd.org

 @FutureMaryland  @StrongFutureMD

meaning lower costs for hiring and training.” In a similar study in California, they found that “large and small businesses, employers’ payroll costs slightly decreased when workers took leave.” Small businesses owners have also indicated their support as 61% would agree to establishing paid family and medical leave programs.

We must also recognize that since the 1920s, according to the [Department of Labor](#) there has been an exponential incline of women in the workforce, many of whom are mothers. With several US states implementing paid leave policies, a [study](#) from the March of Dimes Center for Social Science Research states that there has been a “20 percent reduction in the number of female employees leaving their jobs in the first year after giving birth—and up to a 50 percent reduction after five years.” In addition, there are detrimental effects for women who do not have access to paid family leave in which “30% dropped out of the workforce after giving birth and one in five did not return for over a decade.”

The 21st Century for women has moved beyond maternal responsibilities such as giving birth and caring for ill family members. We live now in a paradoxical society that while we may view women as invaluable members of the workforce and matriarchs, we have not sufficiently adapted to create an environment where all women are able to return to work after taking necessary extended family leave— including both women and men who are low-wage earners. The bill would not only benefit women, but those who are immunocompromised, inflicted with long-term illnesses, and those who must care for terminally ill family members. With many struggling families requiring two incomes and the plight of the pandemic, it is a necessity to ensure paid family leave in the state of Maryland and urge a favorable vote on HB 496.