

**Testimony in Support of HB 496 “Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment”**

House Economic Matters Committee February 15, 2022

**FAVORABLE**

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Renata J. M. Engler, MD, COL (retired), MC, USA

My name is Renata Engler. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 496 which would establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program.

In my perspective as a physician, the need for this legislation has never been more apparent than now, as we enter the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic. As with many other diseases, requirements for prolonged recovery with caregiving assistance and inability to work are common. The invisible unpaid work involved in providing care for sick family members has an estimated value is 470 billion dollars (1) and adversely impacts the health of caregivers as well as a family’s financial well-being with loss of income compounding poorer health outcomes and loss of productivity. While the current pandemic has highlighted the challenges of American caregivers and those affected by prolonged illness, this has been a crisis situation for decades only worsening as families need two incomes and the “Mother at home” is not available to embrace these full-time duties.

Whether it’s long-haul COVID, cancer, acute flares of chronic diseases (autoimmunity, neurologic disorders, or asthma complications), people who are sick should be able to stay home and recover, just as doctors like me tell them to do. Furthermore, people who need care or assistance in their home from a loved one should be able to receive that, without that loved one having to quit their job or lose their income for a few months.

The paid family and medical leave insurance program would allow workers to rest when sick or injured, or to get the medical treatment they need to deal with a chronic issue. It would reduce harmful stress for working people going through a health issue. It would improve health outcomes for newborn babies and their parents.

Furthermore, by allowing working Marylanders to treat health issues earlier, it would prevent more costly treatment for progressed issues, reducing overall health care spending and hopefully cutting down premiums.

For all these reasons, I join fellow doctors in supporting HB 496 to benefit our patients, their families, and our whole state.

I hope that the committee will return a favorable report on HB 496.

Thank you,

Renata J. M. Engler, MD

Renata J. M. Engler, MD

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(1) New data updates the economic value of family caregiving BY LIZ SEEGER | NOVEMBER 15, 2019 – Accessed on Feb 9, 2022 [healthjournalism.org

[https://healthjournalism.org/blog/2019/11/new-data-updates-the-economic-value-of-family-caregiving/#:~:text=The%20analyses%20calculated%20the%20estimated,325%20million%20people%20in%202017\).](https://healthjournalism.org/blog/2019/11/new-data-updates-the-economic-value-of-family-caregiving/#:~:text=The%20analyses%20calculated%20the%20estimated,325%20million%20people%20in%202017).)