

Date of Hearing: 2/15/2022  
Your Full Name: Alice Weisko  
Towson, MD 21286

**TESTIMONY ON HB0008 - POSITION: FAVORABLE FOR LABOR AND  
EMPLOYMENT-FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE  
PROGRAM-ESTABLISHMENT (TIME TO CARE ACT OF 2022)**

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

**FROM:** Alice Weisko, resident of District 12

I am the single mother of an autistic child, the daughter of a frail 99 year-old mother with open wounds and the sister of a person with Stage IV pancreatic cancer. My moral and Jewish values bind me to these people. My love for them is expressed through duty to care for them.

My son was born with multiple disabilities, including autism. Because his care was highly demanding I had to seek employment far below my educational level. Co-pays for his medications and medical visits were high. The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act, passed the year after his birth, preserved my job and health insurance. But my son's behavioral and physical illnesses caused me to miss 5 – 8 weeks of work each year until he entered 11<sup>th</sup> grade, leaving me without pay for a portion of each year. Because it is impossible to find babysitters for autistic children with aggression, I was unable to take on a second job.

I had to choose between financial hardship and my son's needs. Everything except rent, food, and medical bills had to go. Simply going out for breakfast was an extravagance. Treatments that could have made a difference in his life but weren't covered by insurance were not pursued. Emergencies went on credit cards. I spent years of austerity paying them off instead of saving for retirement.

My mother turned 99 and my sister was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer the year before I planned to retire at 70. There was no question. I retired immediately to care for them. That decision will affect my financial standing for the rest of my life.

If I had received paid family leave I would have been a more productive employee with fewer stress-related illnesses. I would have paid more state taxes and be less likely to need assistance in my old age.

Despite these realities, I consider myself fortunate compared to others in identical circumstances who earn a lower hourly wage. They would likely declare bankruptcy, fall below the poverty line, apply for medical assistance and food stamps, and might even enter a homeless shelter. Illness happens to every family. It is sad and stressful but it needn't leave a family destitute.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0008.