



American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Inc.
655 15th St. NW, Suite 503
Washington, D.C. 20005
fightcancer.org/md

February 15, 2022

The Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair
The Honorable Brian Crosby, Vice-Chair
Members of the House Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen St., Room 231
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT OF HB 496 Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

The need for access to paid medical & family leave became clearer nationwide during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) supports policies such as HB 496 that increase access to job-protected paid family & medical leave that can be used for cancer treatments, survivorship care, and caregiving as well as other illnesses.

In 2018, over 6 million workers in the U.S. had a history of cancer.ⁱ Cancer treatment is time consuming – often requiring time off from work for doctor’s visits, surgery and recovery, chemotherapy, and radiation. The flexibility to balance cancer treatment and employment is essential.

Studies show that cancer patients who have paid leave have higher rates of job retention and lower rates of financial burden.ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ Yet not all cancer patients, survivors and caregivers who work have access to paid leave, and without it they risk losing employment or not getting the care they need.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) conducted multiple surveys in 2017-2019 to explore this issue amongst cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers.^{iv} The survey results showed that access to paid medical/family leave makes an important difference for cancer patients, survivors, and their caregivers; contributing to positive outcomes like being able to complete treatment, manage symptoms and side effects, and afford treatments.

The survey results also showed that, access to paid leave is a health equity issue. Respondents who reported having issues with cancer/caregiving and their job – including the quality of their work suffering, having to take two or more days off work in a row, or having to leave work early – most often tended to be those in lower income households, those with lower levels of education, younger respondents, and those working in smaller companies.

Additionally, those respondents who had paid medical/family leave were less likely to report experiencing problems related to financial pressures than those who did not have it. HB 496— increases access to job-protected paid family & medical leave by creating a statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program and insurance fund to provide up to 12 weeks of benefits to a covered individual taking leave from employment due to specified personal and family circumstances.



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ACS CAN applauds the Maryland General Assembly for addressing the need for paid family and medical leave. We ask for a “favorable report” of HB 496.

I can be contacted at jocelyn.collins@cancer.org or **301-254-0072** with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn I. Collins

ⁱ National Center for Health Statistics. Survey Description (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/data-questionnairesdocumentation.htm>), 2018 National Health Interview Survey Public Use Data Release. Hyattsville, Maryland. Analysis performed by American Cancer Society Intramural Research team, April 7, 2020.

ⁱⁱ Veenstra CM, Regenbogen SE, Hawley ST, Abrahamse P, Banerjee M, Morris AM. Association of Paid Sick Leave With Job Retention and Financial Burden Among Working Patients With Colorectal Cancer. *JAMA*. 2015 Dec 22;314(24):2688-90. doi: 10.1001/jama.2015.12383. PubMed PMID: 26717032.

ⁱⁱⁱ Veenstra, C.M., Abrahamse, P., Wagner, T.H., Hawley, S.T., Banerjee, M. & Morris, A.M. (2018). Employment Benefits and Job Retention: Evidence Among Patients With Colorectal Cancer. *Cancer Med*. 2018 Mar; 7(3): 736–745. doi: 10.1002/cam4.1371.

^{iv} See Public Opinion Strategies. Key Findings – National Survey of Cancer Patients, Survivors and Caregivers. December 8, 2017.

<https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/ACS%20CAN%20Paid%20Leave%20Surveys%20Key%20Findings%20Press%20Memo%20FINAL.pdf>