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Testimony on Maryland House Bill 496

Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Shayne Dizard, Member of Progressive Maryland Healthcare Task Force
DATE: February 15, 2022
POSITION: Support

My name is Shayne Dizard. I am a resident of District 19. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 496, which would establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program.

I am a retired Community Health Nurse/Parent Educator having done home visits to support young children and their families for over 40 years. Everyone I worked with, no matter their background or income, wanted more than anything to stay home with their new child or with a family member who was experiencing a serious illness. However, for too many people, the fear of losing their job or not having enough money to provide shelter and food for their family meant they weren't able to act on the most basic human instinct of caring for their loved one. Passing HB 496 will make it possible for people in Maryland to stay home and receive some income if they have a serious illness or when their loved one needs their care.


There is much research to show that a parent being home with their new child is critical for bonding and the ongoing parenting relationship. With a newborn, parents need time at home to manage the sleep deprivation from around the clock infant feedings. It is cruel to not provide at least 12 weeks of paid family leave for parenting an infant. Welcoming a new child; a serious illness; or the end of life of a family member are some of the most significant times in any person's life. I have witnessed the deep sadness, guilt, and regret that people experience when they aren't able to give the care that is needed for their loved one because they can't afford to stay home. This can lead to lifelong physical and emotional health problems. However, paid family and medical leave creates the possibility for positive health outcomes for everyone in the family.

People in the US have been demanding family leave for over 100 years. Yet, despite being the richest country in the world, we are the only country among more than 120 countries that doesn't guarantee any paid family leave! This is shameful! Mexico provides 12 weeks with 100% of the person's salary, Bulgaria provides 58.6 weeks with 90% of the person's salary, and the Slovak Republic provides 164 weeks with paid




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leave. Surely Maryland can provide 12 weeks and a partial salary. Maryland can be proud to contribute to the health and well being of its people by passing HB 496.

For these reasons, **I ask the committee to return a favorable report on HB 496.**

Thank you,
Shayne Dizard BSN, RN, MS
Member of Progressive Maryland Healthcare Task Force
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