

Date of Hearing: February 15, 2022

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TESTIMONY ON HB496 - POSITION: (FAVORABLE)
**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: The Jewish Community Relations Council, Jewish Federation of Howard County, Laura Salganik, Co-Chair

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of the Jewish Federation of Howard County. The JCRC unanimously endorsed this critically important legislation. As Jews, we know that preserving life and health is paramount above all else. Paid family and medical leave benefits everyone and is an issue that 88% of Marylanders support.

Much of the case in support of the Time to Care Act focuses on preventing employees from having to quit their jobs to welcome new babies or care for ill loved ones. However, the act can also help in the opposite way – by preventing workers with new babies or ill loved ones from deciding they can't afford to leave their job. This results in family members who don't get the care they need and, truth be told, stressed workers who cannot possibly function at their best.

I am pleased that the Maryland bill offers a larger percentage of income to those with the lowest salaries. Rhode Island has paid family leave but does not have a sliding scale, and my son heads a nonprofit there with many employees in relatively low-paid social services jobs. I learned from him that these workers often feel they just can't afford to use the paid family leave benefit because it is so low. In reality, the benefit doesn't exist for them. That is why I'm glad the Maryland bill is different.

I am also pleased that the Maryland bill has an inclusive definition of family, and a 50/50 split in contribution from employers and employees. This bill provides an enormously important benefit at a minimal cost to the state, and at a very small cost that is shared by employers and workers. By creating a cost-effective insurance program across all businesses in Maryland, everyone can benefit. I respectfully urge this committee to vote in favor of HB496.

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