



TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable C.T. Wilson

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

DATE: March 29, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 496 – *Commission on the Establishment of a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program*

On behalf of the LifeSpan Network, the Maryland Association of Adult Day Services, the Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association, and the Hospice and Palliative Care Network of Maryland, we respectfully **support** House Bill 496 as amended in the House of Delegates. House Bill 496 creates a Commission to study key factors necessary for implementation of a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program.

On behalf of our respective memberships and our employees, we value our workforce and understand that there are times that this workforce must be absent to care for themselves and their family members. Never is this need clearer than during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as providers of care to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, we must balance this need against our obligation to ensure that quality of care is provided to our residents and clients on a consistent and uninterrupted basis, often 24 hours, seven days a week. When employees are absent from work, care still must be provided. While the absent employee would be compensated by the established Fund under the bill, the employer would still need to pay for a replacement worker to ensure that care is being provided. Often, this is through overtime of existing staff or contracting with nurse staffing agencies, which is now being charged at rates often four times pre-pandemic.

For various reasons, there is simply an inadequate number of staff to care for patients. Because Medicaid continues to reimburse providers below the cost of care, many providers are competing with retail establishments and other big box stores for staff because they can pay higher wagers. We are strongly concerned that this bill will exacerbate the staffing crisis given that more individuals would qualify for leave (over Maryland's paid sick and safe leave) to care for individuals other than themselves for extended periods of time.

Therefore, given the precarious situation that many providers of health care are experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both those that accept Medicaid and those that do not, we believe that House Bill 496 as amended by the House of Delegates is the best approach for determining how a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program should be implemented. The report and recommendations from the Commission still will allow for timely consideration.

For more information call:

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