



Welfare Advocates

Founded 1979

228 W. Lexington Street — Suite 220 • Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3432

Phone: 667-600-3356 • Email: klingenmaier@cc-md.org

House Bill 988

Labor and Employment- Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program- Modifications

House Economic Matters Committee

March 7, 2023

Support

Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate about and advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.

Welfare Advocates strongly supports HB 988, which modifies the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program by specifying various aspects of programmatic implementation, administration, and the cost-sharing split. Welfare Advocates also strongly supports the sponsor amendments that make the cost-sharing split 50-50 between employers and employees.

Passing the Time to Care Act last session was a monumental first step in realizing a Maryland FAMLI program, as the need to take time off is universal, but the ability to do so is not. The critical work to implement an accessible, equitable, and robust FAMLI program is the next major step in fulfilling the promise of the Time to Care Act of 2022 so that no one will have to choose between caring for a loved one or paying the bills. HB 988 puts important provisions and parameters in place for building a robust FAMLI program, propelling the program squarely down the path for a successful and smooth implementation.

In particular, HB 988 - with sponsor amendments - sets the contribution rate for the program with a cost-sharing split of 50% employees, 50% employers. This is fundamentally important, as it keeps the program affordable and equitable for employers and employees in Maryland. As everyone benefits from a statewide FAMLI program, all stakeholders should contribute to the costs. For instance, FAMLI programs - like California's program - have decreased poverty among mothers with one-year-olds, which ultimately reduces budgetary expenditures in other state-funded safety net programming like Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA).¹ Reducing the number of children and families living in or near poverty through paid leave increases the economic security of all Marylanders. Consequently, FAMLI programs are a collective good, and splitting the contribution rate 50/50 recognizes this.

Ultimately, HB 988 with sponsor amendments lays the foundation for a strong FAMLI program that will improve and advance the health and financial security of all Marylanders. **For the reasons stated above, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 988.**

Submitted by Lisa Klingenmaier, Chair of Welfare Advocates

¹ Alexandra Boyle Stanczyk, Does Paid Family Leave Improve Household Economic Security Following a Birth? Evidence from California, Social Service Review 93, no. 2 (June 2019): 262-304. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/703138>
