



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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## **House Bill 988 –Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications Economic Matters Committee – March 7, 2023 SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB 988, an update to the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program, which [passed into law](#) in the 2022 legislative session. We are grateful to the Economic Matters Committee and to the Maryland House of Delegates for recognizing the importance of a robust family and medical leave insurance system last session. This bill strengthens the program and prepares for thoughtful implementation by the MD Dept. of Labor, most notably committing to an equitable division between employer and employee contributions to the program, proposing a 50-50 split. This bill also thoughtfully responds to some opposition from local government partners who are seeking additional time for planning and implementation, adding one extra year before coverage requirements kick in beginning in 2026.

**The best paid leave program is one that treats workers and their employers equitably, acknowledging shared responsibilities and shared benefits.** A 50-50 cost-sharing split is a fundamentally important aspect of the legislation, as it keeps the program affordable and fair for both employers and employees in Maryland. We believe that the costs of the program should be equally shared because the benefits of the program are equally received. As participating workers are able to take care of themselves or family members in a sustainable way, so are participating employers reaping the benefits of higher employee retention, productivity, profitability, and morale, according to the [National Partnership for Women and Families' research](#) on other states' recent experience.

**Equitable cost sharing also recognizes the racial impact of a paid leave program**, and the need to support workers of color who disproportionately lack access. Black and Latino workers are far more likely to forgo needed time off when they lack paid leave and take on more debt if they do take leave, according to a [recent study from the Pew Research Center](#). Lawmakers should use a racial equity lens to construct our new system, acknowledging persistent racial disparities in access and avoiding replicating those same burdens in the cost-share structure.

**Our members have personally been impacted by lack of access to paid leave to care for new children, for aging or ill relatives, and for our own medical needs. We ask for your support for HB 988 to strengthen the program and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Diana Conway  
WDC President

Melissa Bender  
WDC Advocacy Committee