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**My name is Lisa A. Barkan. I am a resident of District 42B. I am submitting this testimony in support HB#/ 988, Family Leave Insurance Program–Modifications**

Last session this Legislature passed the Time To Care Act which was an historic victory for all Marylanders. It provides Marylanders some paid time off to take care of themselves or their loved ones who are ill without fearing that they will lose their job or be unable to pay for food, rent or their mortgage.

Passing the Time to Care Act was the first step in creating an equitable and functioning paid leave program. SB 828 with sponsor amendments addresses the second step—implementing the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program contained in the Time to Care Act. SB 828 specifies various aspects of programmatic implementation, administration and the cost-sharing split. Importantly, the sponsor amendments contain a 50/50 split in cost sharing between employers and employees. Such a split would make the program more equitable and affordable. It is also in line with most other states including Delaware.

I know how important paid family leave is. My son Alex was born with a liver disease. When he was eight and a half months old he needed a liver transplant. His doctors told my husband and me that one of us should remain home with him for four months after his transplant. At that time, I worked as an Assistant Attorney General in the Maryland Office of the Attorney General. My co-workers donated some of their leave time to me and I was paid for four months.

When Alex was two and a half years old, he developed an aggressive lymphoma which was caused by the immunosuppressant medicine. He was hospitalized in September and he died at the end of October. He went into the hospital and he never came home. My co-workers donated time to me once again and I was paid for the time Alex was in the hospital until I returned to work. There are other working parents who have critically ill children. They deserve a robust and accessible paid family leave program.

Last year, Maryland passed one of the strongest and most comprehensive paid family leave programs in the country. The 50/50 split contained in the sponsor amendments creates a program that is equitable to both employees and employers and it allows Maryland's paid family leave program to continue to be held up as a national model.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB# 828.**