



Testimony in Support of HB 988

Family And Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

Dear Chair Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones and I am the political director with 1199 SEIU. We are the largest healthcare union in the nation with over 10,000 members in Maryland and DC working in hospitals, long term care facilities, and federally qualified health centers. 1199 SEIU strongly supports SB 828, which modifies the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program by specifying various aspects of programmatic implementation, administration, and the cost-sharing split. 1199 SEIU strongly supports making the cost-sharing split 50-50 between employers and employees.

Passing the Time to Care Act of 2022 last legislative session was a historic victory for all Marylanders - and it was just the first step in realizing Paid Family and Medical Leave in Maryland. The critical work to create and 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, and the General Assembly still has a key role to play in this collective effort. Passing HB 988 will set important parameters for the FAMLI program, putting the program firmly on the path toward successful implementation.

For 1199 SEIU members, we know how essential care work is. Approximately 80% of older adults have at least one chronic illness, and in order to stay healthy and productive, older adult workers need time to care. As our workforce and overall population ages, FAMLI programs allow older adults - and their caregivers - access to paid leave to manage serious health conditions, which strengthens families and improves the public health of all Marylanders.

In particular, HB 988 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 both employers and employees in Maryland. A 50/50 cost-sharing split is in line with most other states - including our neighboring state of Delaware - that have recently passed FAMLI programs. Maryland passed one of the strongest and most comprehensive FAMLI programs in the country, and this sponsor amendment to create a 50/50 cost-sharing split is of the utmost importance to ensure our program centers the needs of both employees and employers, continuing to set the bar as a national model.

1199 SEIU appreciates your consideration and strongly urges a favorable report on HB 988 with sponsor amendments.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones, Political Director

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