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March 7, 2023

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The Honorable C. T. Wilson
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 988- Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

Dear Chairman Wilson:

The Maryland Commission on Caregiving is pleased to submit this **letter of support for HB 988- Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications**. This modifies the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program by specifying various aspects of programmatic implementation, administration, and the cost-sharing split.

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.

Serving as the ‘voice of the Maryland family caregiver,’ the Maryland Commission on Caregiving (“Commission”) is charged with recommending policies that positively impact family caregivers, soliciting and responding to their concerns and acknowledging their contributions. A new study by the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers finds that one in five full-time workers cares for a family member with a serious illness or disability. Nearly 20 percent of them said they had to quit a job to care for a relative and 40 percent said they had to go to part-time work. Three-quarters said they have had to leave work early to care for a loved one, 70 percent took time off and 60 percent had to take two or more days off.¹ The loss of wages caregivers experience are estimated to be a staggering \$522 billion every year.²

FAMLI programs foster opportunities for families to care for aging loved ones, and as a result, studies show declines in nursing home utilization rates in states that have FAMLI programs.³ When older adults are able to age in place, it creates stronger communities for all Marylanders.

Implementing Maryland’s FAMLI program with a cost-sharing split of 50% employees, 50% employers 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.

¹ <https://www.rosalynncarter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/210140-RCI-National-Surveys-Executive-Summary-Update-9.22.21.pdf>

² https://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP66196.html

³ Does Paid Family Leave Reduce Nursing Home Use? The California Experience <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pam.22038>

The Commission works to ensure that caregivers across the lifespan are equipped with the resources needed to provide safe care to their loved ones. Passage of HB 988 would support such efforts which is why the Commission respectfully urges a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Eastman". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jennifer Eastman, Chair, MD Commission on Caregiving