

TESTIMONY ON HB 988

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE PROGRAM - MODIFICATIONS

House Economic Matters Committee

March 7, 2023

SUPPORT

Submitted by: Dr. Ealena Callender

Dr. Ealena Callender 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.

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.

Doctors like me often recommend that our patients take time off of work to be able to fully recover from a sickness or injury. Many times, we recommend that they have a loved one help care for them, so that they can heal more quickly. Unfortunately, too many aren't able to take time from work because they can't afford to miss a paycheck or risk losing their job. This makes our communities and our workforce sicker, which is why this legislation is needed. When patients don't take the time they need to recover, they may be less productive at work and risk complications that actually require them to take even more time off.

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.¹ Maryland passed one of the most comprehensive FAMLI programs in the country, and establishing 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.

Research shows that paid family and medical leave helps individuals — newborns, new parents, people recovering from addiction, older adults — both in terms of physical and mental health. When so many people are able to get healthy without worrying about paying the bills, our communities and our whole state will be stronger.

Dr. Ealena Callender appreciates your consideration and strongly urges a favorable report on HB 988.

¹ A Better Balance. 2023. Comparative Chart of Paid Family and Medical Leave Laws in the US.
<https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/paid-family-leave-laws-chart/>