



TESTIMONY For HB0988

Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Modifications

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Qi

Committee: Economic Matters

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0988 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition strongly supports SB0828, which modifies the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program by specifying various aspects of programmatic implementation, administration, and the cost-sharing split. We also strongly support the sponsor amendments, which make the cost-sharing split 50-50 between employers and employees, putting SB0828 in the same posture as the House Bill.

Most of us have experienced the stress of having a job, and also having children, or aging parents, or medical emergencies that cause us to take time off from work. Having paid family medical leave is a necessity to navigate the pace of life that we have today.

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. We now need to take the next major step in fulfilling the promise of the Time to Care Act of 2022. Passing SB0828 with the sponsor amendments will set important parameters for the FAMLI program, putting the program firmly on the path toward successful implementation.

In particular, it 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.

It does not take a study to show that individuals facing a serious medical crisis - like cancer - are better able to make their appointments, complete their treatment, increase their treatment options, and afford their care if they have access to a FAMLI program. Nor do we have to stretch to know that having

paid family medical leave helps families to care for aging loved ones which lowers nursing home utilization rates and provides a better environment for those needing care. Finally, military families need access to FAMILI programs to make child care arrangements, take care of their mental health, attend military ceremonies, and re-enter back into family life.

For all of us, having a strong family medical leave program will make life in Maryland happier, healthier, and more productive. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.