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*Subcommittees*

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 52**

Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart

January 30, 2024 • House Appropriations Committee

**What the Bill Does:**

HB 52 provides paid days off for a state worker who experiences the loss of a child. First, if a state worker or their partner experiences a stillbirth or otherwise loses a child before they reach six months, the bill clarifies that the employee would remain eligible for the state's parental leave policy. This leave would allow workers to recover both physically and emotionally from the loss.

Second, if a state worker loses a child between the age of six months and 21 years old, that employee would be entitled to ten paid days off. This leave is intended to give employees the ability to recover from the initial shock of their loss and to make burial and funeral arrangements for their child.

**Why the Bill is Important:**

No parent should have to endure the loss of a child. A paid parental bereavement leave program provides a small but important way for the state to lessen the burden on state employees going through the unimaginable. Under this program, the bereaved would be granted two weeks fully paid to get their lives in order and to start the grieving process. And the bill also clarifies that pregnant workers'—and their spouses'—use of parental leave policies should not depend on whether their child survived the first six months of their lives.

Of course, the hope is that no state employee ever has to take this leave. But tragedies happen, and Maryland should have a system in place that is generous, separate from all other leave programs, and easy to access for a newly bereaved employee.

A paid parental bereavement program makes Maryland a more attractive employer. At last count, there were [over 6,000 vacancies](#) across the state government. While progress has been made, it is slow-going, and it can be hard to recruit talent without the same pay and benefits that the private sector - and even other governments - are offering. Illinois' [Child Bereavement Leave Act](#) extends bereavement leave to all employees, not just civil servants, but does not guarantee paid time off for the full 10 days and requires that employees provide 48 hours notice before taking time off work using bereavement leave. Meanwhile, our direct competition for the hiring of civil servants, Washington, D.C. offers [10 days of paid leave for city employees](#) suffering the death of a child.

HB 52 provides a small but important relief to parents going through the unimaginable, brings Maryland in line with our competition, makes our state more attractive as an employer, and works towards [Governor Moore's goal](#) of reducing the state vacancies.

**I urge a favorable report.**