



February 13, 2025

Legislative Position: Unfavorable

House Bill 824

Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Covered Individuals - Alternatively Qualified Individuals  
House Economic Matters Committee

Dear Chairman Wilson and members of the committee:

Founded in 1969, the Howard Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to helping businesses—from sole proprietors to large international firms—grow and succeed. With the power of 700 members that encompass more than 170,000 employees, the Howard County Chamber is an effective partner with elected officials and advocates for the interests of the county's business community.

House Bill 824 (HB 824) would allow certain individuals who have earned at least \$7,200 in total lifetime wages in Maryland to obtain paid benefits under the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program. Under HB 824, eligible individuals would be entitled to benefits once per year in the amount of \$2,000 for the 6-month period beginning July 1, 2027, and at an amount determined by the Maryland Department of Labor for the 12-month period beginning January 1, 2028 and each subsequent year thereafter.

In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the FAMLI Act with an expected \$841.8 million in FY 27 being taken from employers and employees to fund the program. Based on more recent data, the program is now expected to take \$1.838 billion from employers and employees to fund the program. In a recent letter from the Department of General Services (DGS) to the Board of Public Works, DGS indicated that the program is expected to cost up to \$2 billion annually. Due to HB 824's expansion of benefits, the Howard County Chamber is concerned that the bill will further increase the expected costs associated with the FAMLI program and further contribute to Maryland's dire economic circumstance.

Additionally, HB 824 proposes an "alternatively qualified" individual to include those who are unemployed. This provision allows individuals who are not employed and not contributing to the FAMLI Trust Fund to receive paid benefits under the program. This raises significant concern about the fairness and sustainability of the program, as it extends benefits to individuals who are not contributing to the system.

For these reasons, the Howard County Chamber of Commerce respectfully **requests an unfavorable report on HB 824.**

Sincerely,

Kristi Simon  
President & CEO  
Howard County Chamber of Commerce