



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB355

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE PROGRAM – DELAY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Senate Finance Committee

February 5, 2025

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Jewish Community Relations Council
of Greater Washington

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

Abby Snyder, Co-Chair

P: (240) 593-6121

E: ASnyder@baltjc.org

Anne Wallerstedt, Co-Chair

P: (410) 991-7285

E: AWallerstedt@mdfoodbank.org

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) opposes SB355, which alters the implementation date of the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program by two years.

The overwhelming majority of employees in the United States cannot afford to take time away from work when their families need them most. According to a report by the Center for American Progress, low-wage families are the ones most in need of financial support when illness strikes or when a child is born—and the most likely to take on the care of a family member because they cannot afford a professional caregiver. Too often, out of economic necessity, new parents are forced to go back to work within days of welcoming a new child, forgoing precious bonding and recovery time. Lack of paid leave – which is concentrated in low-wage jobs – exacerbates economic inequality.

Passing the Time to Care Act in 2022 was a historic victory for all Marylanders - and it was just the first step in realizing a paid family and medical leave program in Maryland. Since 2016, The Time to Care Coalition has been working to establish - and now implement - a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program in Maryland that follows our five key principles: the program is cost-effective for workers, employers, and the government; covers all working people and applies equally to all working people; reflects an inclusive definition of family and includes the well-established reasons people need paid family and medical leave; provides up to 12 weeks of leave and replaces a substantial share of workers' usual wages; and protects workers against adverse consequences for taking leave.

Delaying implementation of the FAML I program will harm hundreds of thousands of families, caretakers, service members, and Marylanders going through a medical crisis. According to the latest actuarial study commissioned by the DOL, it's anticipated that the FAML I program will receive over 165,000 claims in its first year, just shy of 14,000 claims a month.¹ Consequently, a two-year delay in implementation means that over 324,000 Marylanders, who would have had access to paid leave if the program was implemented on time, will instead have to make impossible choices between caring for themselves and their loved ones or maintaining their income and paying their bills. This is the very reason Maryland lawmakers enacted the FAML I program.

Extending the time Marylanders must wait to access paid leave hurts our state's economy and small businesses. The Urban Institute study noted that FAML I will provide a \$98 million tax benefit to small businesses, leveling the playing field for small businesses to compete with large corporations and making the state an enticing place to start a business.⁴ Moreover, lack of access to paid family and medical leave is a leading reason women leave the workforce; as Maryland already struggles with declining Labor Participation Rates (LPR) for women, further delays to FAML I implementation further hinders our state's sluggish economic growth.⁵ Maintaining the current FAML I implementation timeline benefits families, businesses, and Maryland's economy.

MAP appreciates your consideration and requests the committee provide a unfavorable report on SB355.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.