

**Testimony in Opposition of SB 355
Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Delay of Implementation**

**Senate Finance Committee
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A Better Balance (ABB) is a national legal advocacy organization with four regional offices dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace and helping workers meet the conflicting demands of work and family. Our organization provides legal and policy support to paid family and medical leave campaigns throughout the nation, and we have worked on all of the paid family and medical leave laws that are now or will soon be in full effect. In addition to our legal research and drafting of paid leave laws, we have significant experience with paid family and medical leave implementation and enforcement.

ABB stands in strong opposition to SB 355, which would delay the implementation of Maryland's Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) by shifting contribution collection to start July 1, 2027 and benefits claims to start July 1, 2028. This would deprive Marylanders of access to the paid family and medical leave, which they have been waiting to see implemented since 2022, for two additional years. ABB echoes the concerns expressed by the Maryland Time to Care Coalition in its testimony opposing SB 355.

Delaying the implementation of the FAMLI program will put Maryland further behind other states that have passed and successfully implemented paid family and medical leave legislation on a shorter timeframe. Even without the additional delay that would be caused by SB 355, ***Maryland already has the longest implementation timeline of any state that has passed paid family and medical leave in the past decade.*** From the date of the law's enactment to the currently planned start of benefits payments, a total of 4 years and 2 months will have passed; if SB 355 goes into effect, this timeline will shoot up to 6 years and 2 months, well beyond the average timeline for other states without pre-existing temporary disability insurance programs, which is approximately 3 years and 3 months. Maine, Minnesota, and Delaware, three states that passed their paid family and medical leave laws *after* Maryland, will see the full implementation of their paid leave programs much sooner—while Marylanders are still left waiting.

With the Time to Care Coalition's support, implementation of Maryland's FAMLI program has already been *delayed twice* in the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions. While these delays were necessary and allowed time for the Department of Labor to prepare for the program's implementation, there are no justifiable reasons for further delays.

Two additional years without implementation means two years' worth of Marylanders in need of paid leave who will instead be forced to choose between caring for themselves and loved ones or their financial security. It also means two years' worth of additional burden on the state's other safety net programs for families who could remain out of poverty if they had access to paid family and medical leave. SB 355 would keep Maryland's small businesses struggling to

compete with large corporations and keep women's workforce participation falling behind for two more years. Marylanders deserve the benefits that the FAMLII program's implementation will bring to their families, their health, their businesses, and the state's economy, and they are already waiting long enough.

A Better Balance reiterates its firm opposition to SB 355 and supports maintenance of the current FAMLII implementation timeline. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, I can be reached at fhameedburne@abetterbalance.org.