

SB355**Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Delay of Implementation**

Finance Committee

February 5, 2025

Oppose

Catholic Charities of Baltimore opposes SB355, which delays the implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program by two years, pushing back the start of employee contributions, benefit claims, and related administrative processes.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

At Catholic Charities, our mission has always been to support and uplift families, helping them navigate life's challenges with dignity and opportunity. A key part of that mission is ensuring that Marylanders, particularly those in low-income households, have access to the resources they need to thrive. This includes not only access to critical services like healthcare and housing support but also the ability to care for loved ones during times of need.

The need to take time off is universal, but the ability to do so is not. Most employees in the U.S. do not have access to paid family leave, and SB355 would continue to leave many without this essential support.¹ This program, particularly beneficial for low-wage workers who are disproportionately affected by the lack of paid leave, would help families avoid the financial strain of losing pay to care for a loved one, recover from a medical crisis, or bond with a newborn or adopted child. For low-income families, just a few days without pay can mean the difference between keeping up with rent or paying for groceries.

Delaying this program further delays the chance to strengthen the health and financial security of Marylanders living in or near poverty. Workers of color, especially Black and Brown individuals, earn significantly less on average than their white counterparts, and women of color are often both the primary breadwinners and caregivers for their families.^{2,3} This makes it even harder for them to absorb the financial strain of unexpected events like medical crises or family care needs. Implementing paid family leave with a pay structure, as proposed in the Time to Care Act of 2022, would be a critical step toward addressing these racial and economic inequities in the workforce and our communities.

For these reasons, as well as those outlined by the Time to Care Coalition, Catholic Charities of Baltimore opposes SB355 and urges the committee to reject the bill.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018, September). National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2018. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/benefits/2018/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2018.pdf>
2. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/12/2018_pfmiscriticalfor_0.pdf
3. National Partnership for Women and Families. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/workplace/paid-leave/paid-family-and-medical-leave-racial-justice-issue-and-opportunity.pdf>