



February 2, 2025

Testimony of Laura Hale

American Heart Association

*Oppose SB 355 Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Delay of Implementation*

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

On behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA) and our 40 million volunteers and supporters, we strongly opposed SB 355 as it will delay vital programming that will support Maryland families.

Now in our centennial year, the AHA is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. Our mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives, and central to that mission is our belief that care should be accessible, affordable, and equitable for all.

Access to Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) is vital to balancing health and wellness with financial stability when managing a serious personal health condition; caring for a family member with a serious health condition; or bonding with a new child after birth, adoption, or placement in foster care. Employers also benefit financially from PFML policies; PFML increases productivity, profits, retention, and employee morale. This program has already been delayed since the legislation was originally passed and families have had to struggle during delay. Continuing to delay will hurt Maryland families and not allow them the paid protection to take time to care for themselves or loved ones when medical emergencies happen.

PFML is especially critical for the cardiovascular patients we represent, as it allows patients the time necessary to treat and recover from a cardiovascular event. For example, heart attacks often require at least four weeks of recovery time, with up to six months of follow-up medical appointments. Research shows approximately 50 percent of heart attack survivors return to work after four weeks and approximately 75 percent return to work after four months. The timeline laid out and allowing for multiple leaves is key in supporting families in Maryland. These families cannot afford any additional delays.

Other health benefits of paid leave include fewer emergency room visits, fewer hospital readmissions for infants and birthing mothers, fewer low birthweight babies, and longer parental lifespan.

The American Heart Association strongly opposes SB 355 and asks for an unfavorable report. Maryland has set strong guidelines in place, now is not the time to delay.

Sincerely,



*L. Hale*

Laura Hale  
Director of Government Relations  
[laura.hale@heart.org](mailto:laura.hale@heart.org)