
SB355: Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Delay of Implementation

Hearing before the Senate Finance Committee, February 5, 2025

Position: UNFAVORABLE

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Workplace Justice Project supports workers' rights to fair compensation and dignity in the workplace. **The PJC opposes SB355, which would delay the implementation timeline of paid family and medical leave in Maryland by another two years.**

- **Family and medical emergencies do not wait for a convenient timeline and neither should the General Assembly.** All of us need time to care—for new babies, aging parents, loved ones with serious health needs or disabilities, and/or ourselves. Without paid family and medical leave, workers will be forced to continue making excruciating choices between caring for their own health or that of a loved one and keeping their paycheck. A two-year delay of the current FAMILI implementation timeline would continue to deny working families the financial support they need in these critical moments.
- **Further delaying paid family and medical leave would exacerbate existing inequities.** While all workers benefit from paid family and medical leave, the policy advances racial and gender equity because women of color are far more likely to lack employer-provided paid leave and to take unpaid leave or forgo needed time off. Implementing the FAMILI program promptly would thus help build economic security for all covered workers, but especially for workers of color.¹ Broadening the scope of who can access paid leave also helps encourage more equal participation in caregiving, allows both parents to bond with a new child without compromising financial stability or professional growth, and helps shift traditional norms about gender roles in family care.
- **Further delaying paid family and medical leave would also delay the positive impacts on businesses and the economy.** Paid leave helps reduce employee turnover and increases employee engagement, productivity, and morale.² Implementing paid family and medical leave also helps level the playing field for small businesses, who could not otherwise afford to offer paid leave, and reduces the burden on individual employers by spreading the cost of leave between employers

¹ Paid Family and Medical Leave: A Racial Justice Issue – and Opportunity, National Partnership for Women and Families, Aug. 2018, <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/paid-family-and-medical-leave-racial-justice-issue-and-opportunity.pdf>.

² National Partnership for Women & Families. (2019). *The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act*. <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/family-act-fact-sheet.pdf>.

and employees. Moreover, when workers have to forgo their wages or even lose their job when a medical or caregiving need arises, they can lose their ability to afford basic necessities and may become more dependent on state-funded safety-net programs.³ Delaying the implementation of the FAML I program means delaying the realization of these benefits to Maryland businesses and the state economy.

- **The implementation of the FAML I program has already been delayed multiple times.** The original legislation establishing the FAML I program passed in 2022, and the implementation timeline was subsequently postponed in both the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions. If SB355 were to pass, Maryland’s implementation timeline—from enactment of the FAML I program in 2022 to the start of benefits payments on July 1, 2028—would be more than 6 years. Every other state with a fully implemented paid family and medical leave program has been able complete implementation in 4 years or less.⁴ There is no reason why Maryland cannot accomplish implementation on a comparable timeline, especially when Maryland has the experiences of these other states to draw upon. Further delays of the implementation of the FAML I program are not justified.

For the foregoing reasons, the PJC **OPPOSES SB355** and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report. If you have any questions, please call Lucy Zhou at 410-625-9409 ext. 245.

³ *Id.*

⁴ A Better Balance, Paid Leave Program Implementation Timelines, <https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/paid-leave-program-implementation-timelines/> (last updated Apr. 26, 2024).