



Chair Pamela Beidle
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 6, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY — SB 880 *Part-Time State Employment Pilot Program*. Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Madame Chair and committee:

My name is Santi Bhagat. I am a physician in policy, founder of Physician-Parent Caregivers — a Maryland nonprofit think tank with over twenty years of health policy advocacy — and the founder of Invisible Wave, a growing social movement for Young Invisibles: young adults ages 18 to 40 who grew up with childhood-onset chronic conditions. This is not a small group: 1 in 3 young Americans grew up with chronic health conditions. Most importantly, I am the mother of a young adult who grew up with epilepsy and know firsthand what happens to these young people and their families.

Maryland's elected leaders have recognized this invisible population for years. Senator Chris Van Hollen and Congressman Jamie Raskin introduced a joint congressional resolution calling on the nation to act. Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, Speaker Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Senators Mary Beth Carrozza and Brian Feldman, and Delegate Sarah Wolek have all championed their inclusion in healthcare, education, and the workforce in Maryland. That bipartisan, bicameral recognition is a foundation we must build on.

I strongly support HB 1248 — and I want to tell you why it's personal.

When my daughter became seriously ill at age 8, I stopped practicing medicine. My husband could no longer travel for his business. We came to the verge of bankruptcy — exactly what research tells us happens to families like ours. A former board member, a Georgetown-trained attorney, faced the same impossible choice and also left her career.

When caregivers are forced out entirely, the losses go far beyond a paycheck.

If I could have worked part time — with benefits — everything would have been different. Our family would not have been on the verge of bankruptcy for two years. We would have had health coverage and contributed to social security. Most importantly, the 15 years of my education and training would have been put to good use. This would have helped my mental health and social connection - and I would have role modeled how mothers can work and balance the family.

And that is exactly what our young adults need too. My daughter is now in her thirties and still cannot commit to full-time work because of her chronic condition. We have ambassadors in our organization facing the same wall. One is a trained accountant — on disability — with skills Maryland's government could use. Another had to leave her job entirely and is now pursuing an executive MBA at Yale. These are not people who lack drive or talent. They lack an on-ramp.

SB 880 builds that on ramp. For caregivers. For young adults with chronic conditions. For Maryland's economy. Millennials and GenZ are the two largest generations and they comprise over half the workforce. Governor Moore pledged to leave no one behind - this bill can address that.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Santi KM Bhagat, MD, MPH
Founder and President

Physician-Parent Caregivers

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