



AFT Healthcare-Maryland

7127 Rutherford Road
Baltimore, MD 21244

Written Testimony Submitted for the Record

Local 5197

Committee: Government Labor and Elections
Bill: House Bill 1579

DATE: March 3, 2026
Position - Support

Good afternoon Chairman and members of the Appropriations Committee

I am Rosemary Wertz, Field Coordinator for AFT Healthcare-Maryland, the exclusive bargaining agent for Healthcare Professionals assigned to Unit E in Maryland State Government. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB 1579. As an exclusive representative, we negotiated an agreement with management regarding implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Program as part of the collective bargaining process. We agreed to the replacement of the Parental Leave Program with provisions under the newly established FAMILI program. Both of these programs are paid leave. Since, FAMILI leave will not be limited to newborns or adopted children under 6, this is an expansion of the eligibility criteria. Therefore, we agreed to the transfer of paid leave benefits under the Parental Leave Program to the Family and Medical Leave Program.

In addition, we support the language change to eliminate the requirement that two state employee parents must be married to each other to qualify for leave to take care of their child. We consider the language "two employees who are responsible for the care and nurturing of a child" to be adequate for eligibility purposes.

We urge the committee to support HB 1579 to allow us to implement this provision of our Memorandum of Understanding.

Respectfully submitted,
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