



## **HOUSE GOVERNMENT, LABOR AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

### **House Bill 1524**

Labor and Employment - Paid Leave - Attendance at School Functions

February 26, 2026

Information

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 1524. The bill would require employers with 15 or more employees, including the University System of Maryland (USM), to provide at least 20 hours of paid leave each year for full-time and part-time employees who are parents to attend school functions at the elementary or secondary school their child attends. The bill is well-intended and clearly rooted in the desire to support Maryland parents by guaranteeing dedicated, protected time to be present in their children's school lives.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

Within the USM, we share deeply the underlying value that working parents deserve meaningful opportunities to participate in essential school activities. Our faculty and staff are the backbone of our institutions, and we work hard to support them with generous, flexible, and comprehensive leave benefits that recognize the realities of balancing work and family.

Indeed, USM employees already earn substantial paid leave – annual, sick, and personal leave – that can be used to meet family needs, including school visits and parent-teacher engagements. Employees currently receive three personal days (24 hours) each year – four days in leap years – which are expressly designed for personal matters such as the school activities contemplated in House Bill 1524. In addition, beginning July 1, 2026, all employees will benefit from the statewide Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, which represents another major enhancement to the paid leave landscape.

Our emphasis on supporting employees is also reflected in the leave balances our workforce typically maintains. The average eligible USM employee holds approximately 17.5 weeks (700 hours) of sick leave and 6.5 weeks (260 hours) of vacation leave. These substantial balances demonstrate the extent to which our current benefits already provide employees with the flexibility they need to handle a wide range of family obligations, including those involving school-aged children. We are proud to offer such strong support.

That said, HB 1524 introduces a new, highly specific leave category that would apply to only a small subset of employees. Identifying which employees have school-age children, developing and communicating new policies, reconfiguring human resource protocols, and negotiating the implications of this new leave with union partners would all be necessary steps. Moreover, while the bill's fiscal impact is not easily quantifiable – given that usage rates cannot be predicted – it is reasonable to expect that eligible employees would utilize the full annual allotment.

The USM wants to underscore our appreciation for the bill's intent and our shared commitment to supporting the parents. USM employees are dedicated public servants, and we value legislation that recognizes their responsibilities at home as well as at work. Our goal is to continue providing robust benefits that give employees the flexibility they need.

