



Testimony - HB 536,  
Employment Discrimination - Reasonable Accommodations - Disabilities Due to  
Childbirth, Menopause, and Related Medical Conditions  
Favorable  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
March 25, 2026  
Christopher C. Cano, MPA  
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Smith & Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents more than 20,000 working people across Maryland, including childcare providers, public school employees, and college faculty—workers who keep our communities running and our families supported every single day. A significant portion of our membership are women, many of whom will experience pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, or related medical conditions while working.

HB 536 is about dignity, fairness, and modernizing our workplace protections to reflect the realities of today's workforce.

Current law provides important protections for pregnancy-related conditions, but it does not go far enough. This bill closes a critical gap by explicitly extending reasonable accommodation protections to temporary disabilities related to childbirth, menopause, and associated medical conditions—such as lactation and the management of menopause symptoms. These are not rare or marginal experiences; they are common, predictable stages of life that should never jeopardize a worker's livelihood.

Too often, workers are forced to choose between their health and their paycheck. A childcare provider recovering from childbirth, a school employee managing severe menopause symptoms, or a worker needing time and space to express breast milk should not have to risk discipline, lost wages, or job insecurity simply for taking care of their bodies.

HB 536 ensures that workers can request reasonable accommodations—such as modified duties, adjusted schedules, temporary transfers, or leave—without fear of retaliation. It also provides clear guidance to employers, creating a fair and transparent process that balances worker needs with legitimate operational considerations.

Importantly, this bill maintains a reasonable standard by allowing employers to consider undue hardship, including operational impacts. This is not an unfunded mandate—it is a balanced approach that recognizes both the needs of workers and the realities of running a workplace.

For SEIU Local 500 members, especially our family childcare providers and education support professionals, these protections are essential. These workers often perform physically demanding labor in environments where flexibility is limited. Without clear legal protections, they are disproportionately vulnerable to being pushed out of the workforce at precisely the moment they need stability the most.

At its core, HB 536 is about equity. It acknowledges that women's health—and particularly life stages like menopause—has too often been ignored or stigmatized in workplace policy. By bringing these conditions into the framework of reasonable accommodations, Maryland has the opportunity to lead with fairness and common sense.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 536.

Thank you for your time and consideration.