



**STATEMENT BY
ANDY STERN, CHAIR
THE GREATER BETHESDA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
REGARDING
HB839-LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT – FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE
PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT
HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 24, 2020
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE REPORT**

Good afternoon, Chairman Davis and Vice Chair Dumais. My name is Andy Stern and I'm President of Andy Stern's Office Furniture, a division of Benjamin Office Supply. I am here today wearing two hats. One on behalf of my company and the other as Chair of The Greater Bethesda Chamber. On behalf of our 550-member businesses and their more than 45,000 employees in Montgomery County, this statement is in **Opposition to HB839 – Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program -Establishment.**

This bill would establish a Family & Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program, which would provide up to 12 weeks of benefits to an employee who is taking partially paid or unpaid leave for certain reasons. This bill also directs each employee and employer to contribute to the fund.

We understand that there will be times when employees - and employers for that matter - need to take time for personal reasons such as caring for a family member or other reasons as outlined in the bill. However, between sick leave, annual leave, personal leave and leave without pay, employees are enabled to take the time to address these issues. In addition, the bill doesn't allow an employer to require an employee to use any accrued paid leave first. Basically, what this bill does, is add on additional days of leave beyond what is mandated in the employers' policies.

The administrative burdens and additional costs, especially to small businesses, could make the difference of surviving or causing excessive financial strains. Employers can also expect that there will be higher absentee rates as employees will take advantage of these new benefits.

For a business like mine, it could be devastating. Our employees have a certain expertise that takes years to build regarding all types of office furniture. This isn't something where we would just bring in a temp to replace them. This would mean lost business and ultimately lost employees.

In a year when the General Assembly is focused on increased taxes and reduced tax credits, this is not the time to hit the business community with one more mandate. We implore that the sponsors of this legislation go back to the drawing board and keep in mind the unintended consequences this bill will have if passed.

For these reasons, The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests that you give House Bill 839 an **Unfavorable Report.**