

Testimony Concerning HB 839
“Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance
Program - Establishment”
Submitted to the House Economic Matters Committee
February 24, 2020

Position: Support

Good afternoon my name is Tanya Brice and I support HB 839 “Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment.” I live in Owings Mills, Maryland District 11. I am a social worker and a single mother of three. I have a son named Jarod who is 20 years old and two eight-year-old twins named Mason and Morgon. One of my twins has autism and an intellectual disability. Like any mother they require a lot of my time but are the love and the light of my life. You may have read my story in *The New York Times* a couple weeks ago in an article about the “sandwich generation” – that is the millions of Americans who are caring for both their aging parents and their own young children.

About five years ago, when my twins were still toddlers, my mother moved in with us to our apartment. My mom was medically fragile — she had both hepatitis C and diabetes and was unable to fully care for herself. The time it takes to navigate the system, research, and visit assisted living facilities is enormous but necessary to make sure our loved ones are safe and well cared for.

For example in 2017 after several falls I worked with North West Hospital to place my mom in assisted living. It was confirmed after three weeks they were feeding their patients bread & syrup and didn’t provide basic care. As a result she had to return to my home. Unfortunately Medicaid wouldn’t pay for a home health aide, so I had to pay for that out of pocket. As I mentioned I’m a social worker and while I love my job I really struggled financially on a social worker’s salary at that time. I remember the week my mother was moving in. I had to get her ventilator set up and make sure she had a bed. It was very stressful because I couldn’t take time away from work. I needed that paycheck or I couldn’t have afforded to do any of the things my mom needed much less pay the rent, buy the groceries, and provide the necessities for my own children. I would do anything for my family but needless to say my budget and my schedule were both close to the breaking point. Being able to count on receiving a partial wage replacement while I was taking time away from work to get my mother settled would have meant that I wouldn’t have to choose between being there financially for her or being there to help care for her. My mother has since passed away. I wish I could have been there with her more during those last few weeks of her life without being torn between the choice of a paycheck or my family.

Paid Family Leave would have meant that I wouldn’t have had to choose. It would have allowed me to be at home with my mother when she needed me. It would have lessened the financial burden of paying for a home health aide so my kids could have had the food security they needed. It would have allowed me to be more present for all my children including Mason who has special needs requiring extra attention. It would have allowed me to be what we all want to be --- a loving parent and a loving caregiver for our aging parents.

I never thought my story would be in *The New York Times*. I just wish it was it was for a reason other than Americans not having the supports they need to work and care for loved ones. I started off by saying that I am a social worker and a mom. So it is in my nature to fight for what’s right and not give up until everyone has what they need. Maryland needs Time to Care.

Attachment: [“It’s Pretty Brutal”: The Sandwich Generation Pays a Price The New York Times February 11, 2020.](#)