



**Hearing Testimony February 24, 2020
House Economic Matters Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC**

HB 839 – Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment

SUPPORT

Good afternoon members of the House Economic Matters Committee. My name is Travis Simon and I am with SEIU Local 500. SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Adjunct Faculty at several Maryland colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. SEIU Local 500 believes that every Marylander deserves the time to care for new babies, aging parents, and loved ones with disabilities or other health needs. Therefore, I am pleased to testify in support of House Bill 839 – The Time to Care Act.

We believe that caring for a family member is a basic responsibility we all share, not a privilege reserved for only those who can afford to do so. Everyone, from part-time workers to full-time employees and management, deserves dignity when balancing the responsibilities of work and family. Yet many Marylanders can't take time to care because they lack paid family leave. Unpaid leave forces too many Marylanders to choose between income and family. If passed, HB 839 will alleviate an already stressful situation of our residents.

I can share a personal story that illustrates how the lack of paid family leave to employees has been a matter of tremendous concern to my family in recent years. And it is why it is personally meaningful for me to deliver this testimony to the committee today. Six years ago, this month, my fiancé was rushed to the hospital with a severe migraine that wouldn't go away at four in the morning. We rushed him to the Emergency Room where after initial examination we were told that he would have to go into emergency brain surgery because there was an abnormal growth in his brain that was pushing his brain into his skull. The diagnosis shocked our family and changed our lives forever. After the surgery he was out of work for over two months and I was forced to play the role of caregiver during that time. Even four weeks after he was released from the hospital, he still required shots administered to him 6 times a day and travel to and from doctor's appointments nearly every other day. All of which made it nearly impossible for me to work during that time. I simply don't know what I would have done if I didn't work for an organization that provided me with the leave to take care of my fiancé. Simply put, it would have been an impossible decision for me to make between caring for Daniel or collecting my salary. And it's one that no Marylander should have to make.

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Pia Morrison, President**



Additionally, polling done by Opinion Works has found that nearly 80% of voters in Maryland support this legislation even after they are told about the minimal contribution from workers. It is supported by a vast majority of Marylanders, and if passed, all Marylanders will benefit.

Members of the House Economic Matters Committee, we can do better! Let's make sure all working Marylanders are able to contribute to the economy while at the same time give them the paid time off to care for their families. **We ask for your support for HB 839 and strongly urge a favorable committee report!**

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