
**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 539
Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program –
Establishment**

**Senate Finance Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 539, The Time to Care Act, that establishes the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program and gives employees access to paid leave to take care of their families.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. \ MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Senate Bill 539 recognizes that families face certain undue hardships that should be addressed. Maryland families need the flexibility to bond with and care for a new child or a seriously ill aging family member. The legislation sets up an insurance program that employees pay into, that provides wage replacement benefits if the employee must take leave to take care of a loved one. As it relates to MSEA members, SB 539 does not impact collective bargaining agreements and allows local school systems that offer greater benefits to be exempted from paying into the fund and exempted from access to the benefits.

In schools, educators regularly see parents barely able to take time off from work to bond with a new baby or care for an aging parent. It's hard to see parents having to choose between a paycheck and spending time with a family member who needs them. This legislation would allow employees to pay into a system and access those benefits later if they need them. This is a better system for children, parents, and families overall. MSEA supports this bill that supports working Marylanders.

Maryland is long overdue in giving employees access to time to care for loved ones for working families and **MSEA urges a favorable report of SB 539.**