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Avi Wallace
12003 Montrose Park Pl
Rockville, MD 20852-4157
mogisdaslaughterer@gmail.com

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB539

Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment

TO: Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and the members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Avi Wallace

My name is Avi Wallace. I live in Rockville in District 16 and I am 13 years old. This testimony is in support of Bill SB539, the Time to Care Act.

I recently had my Bar Mitzvah, the Jewish ceremony that marks the transition from childhood to Jewish adulthood. My Bar Mitzvah project was working on Paid Family and Medical Leave. I chose to work on this issue because I feel that it is very important for us to acknowledge that people have to choose between their family and their job a lot of the time, and that is not a decision people should have to make. Also, I wanted to inform other people about the need for the Time to Care Act.

I asked the people that were celebrating with me to help send the message to their legislators that Paid Family and Medical Leave is needed. In my Bar Mitzvah speech, I connected the portion of the Torah we were reading that week to Paid Family and Medical Leave. I also asked them to send postcards to their legislators about why they think Paid Family and Medical Leave is important. One person wrote, "I was a family therapist, couples therapist, and individual therapist for over 20 years. There is no doubt that Paid Family and Medical Leave is of utmost importance for families to meet challenges that are integral to development changes throughout the cycle of life. Please support the Time to Care Act." I hope their message sticks with you and shows you that there are many, many people that care.

Right now there are working parents that can barely afford a living with their job or jobs. And if someone in their family has a major illness or there is a new baby they need to take care of, then they can't take care of them because they need to make money so either the sick person or the new baby can eat. They should not have to work with something that important in their lives happening. They need to be able to care for the person that needs caring for and still be able to make money so their family can survive. The choice between your family or your job is not a decision people should have to make and that is why I support SB539.

Connecting to my Jewish roots, our sages say "Whoever withholds an employee's wage it is as though he has taken the person's life from her." (Bava Metzia 112a) If an employer does not pay

their employee the money they need to thrive or even survive, it is a very big problem. We need people who live in Maryland to be able to care for all the moving parts of their lives and this bill will help a lot. **I respectfully urge a favorable report for SB539.**