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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: Elliot Richman

My name is Jeffrey Elliot Richman. I live in Ellicott City in District 9A. This testimony is in support of SB539.

When my son was born I was working for a publishing company two states away from my home. Company policy allowed me about a week of leave to care for my wife and newborn child. Even if the Caesarean section had gone smoothly, this would have been only barely enough. However, my wife developed an infection. As a result, her functionality was severely reduced and her recovery from childbirth was significantly delayed. I requested additional time at home from my employer (this was before telecommuting became commonplace). My request was met with denial and visible annoyance.

It was difficult and costly for us to make it through several months during which my wife was recovering and I was commuting and working, but I had no choice so I made do. Even today, decades later, many if not most fathers still do not have their employer's permission to care for their newborn and spouse for long enough, their wages have not afforded them the savings to take unpaid leave, and they fear termination even if they could afford the time.

I want Maryland to be a better place for families and a leader in social awareness in the United States. The guiding Jewish values of "lovingkindness" (*hesed*) and "repairing the world to leave it a better place" (*tikkun olam*) also justify passage of the Time to Care Act. In the ancient Babylonian Talmud it is written: Whoever withholds an employee's wages, it is as though he has taken the person's life from her (tractate Bava Metzia 112a). Accordingly, we should not ransom a person's wages to allow them to care for their newborn; we should not ransom a person's care for their newborn for them to get their wages. We must make sure that all Marylanders have the capability to take time to be with their families and attend to their own and their family members' health when such need arises.

I respectfully urge a favorable report for SB539.