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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: Jessica Krasnick

My name is Jessica Krasnick. I am a married public school teacher with 2 children under age 4. I live in Baltimore/Rosedale, Maryland in District 8. This testimony is in support of SB539.

As a Reform Jew, there are many reasons I am in full support of this bill. Mainly, the principle of supporting employees to maintain healthy families is imperative. The Union for Reform Judaism states that, "Jewish tradition speaks strongly to valuing workers' dignity as well as maintaining healthy families."

I am a public school teacher and have been teaching in Anne Arundel County Public Schools for nine years. Devoting myself to the service of our state's children is important to me. According to edweek.org, 77% of teachers in our country identify as female. These women not only care for public school children, but also wish to birth and care for their own children. With the low salary that teachers receive, deciding to have children is heart-wrenchingly difficult because they know that to fulfill their dream of having a family of their own, they must do so without pay when birthing and caring for a newborn. Teachers, myself included, sadly joke - "let's start trying for kids in September" so that the baby will be born in June, thus avoiding any lost wages. But as we all know it's not possible to plan, down to the month, when you will have children.

For me, my first child was born at the end of February 2016 and my second in May 2018. Both times, the amount of stress my family and I endured by not having my paycheck for so long in order to care for our children was incredibly difficult and likely contributed to my experiencing postpartum depression. According to a March 2018 study cited in postpartumdepression.org, one in seven women will experience postpartum depression. With my first child, I was one of those seven. Although postpartum depression is a chemical imbalance, there were many catalysts for me which brought this on. One of the catalysts was completely financial - due almost 100% to the stress caused by the fact that I was not being paid during that time.

We were unsuccessfully trying so hard to live on one salary. Then, when our precious new girl was three weeks old, we had some issues in our home that left it unlivable for us and our growing family. We had to move. We found a home that we could afford, but according to the mortgage lender, because I was currently not receiving any paychecks since I was out on FMLA (please never refer to this as maternity leave, it is not), I was considered unemployed and therefore my salary didn't count toward our mortgage approval. Had there been Paid Family and Medical Leave, we would have been able to get our mortgage approved, but because there wasn't, we suffered intensely during what should have been the happiest time in our lives.

Although there is so much more I could say about not being able to buy diapers, or the fact that every country in the world except the United States and Papua New Guinea have paid maternity leave, I will leave you with my story above. Having the added stress of financials during an already difficult time for many new moms who suffer from postpartum depression is just too much for people to handle. We need, as the Union for Reform Judaism stated above, to value our workers' dignity.

Please pass the Time to Care Act, SB539. You will be helping so many families in our state immeasurably.