

February 27, 2020

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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: Carol Stern

I am testifying in favor of SB539 as a resident of Montgomery County's District 16.

The Jewish text that shapes my religious and moral conviction that every employee in the state of Maryland should have access to paid family and medical leave explains that *pikuach nefesh*, the saving of a life, supersedes all other commandments. This assures us that we have a moral obligation to pursue life at any cost. Offering paid leave to employees is an act of *pikuach nefesh* since it prioritizes people's health and well-being. This is a directive for us to secure the wellness of the labor force, which passing this law can help to do.

I have used employer sponsored paid family leave during three crucial times of my life - the birth of my two children, the major illness of my spouse, and during the last weeks of my mother's life. I was one of the fortunate Americans who worked for a Fortune 500 Company that offered this benefit. I know personally how invaluable this paid time off was for me and my family. It is a benefit that all employees should have when these life events occur.

The State of Maryland needs to pass a comprehensive paid family and medical leave law that allows workers to care for themselves, their children, and their parents without sacrificing their livelihood. We know that caregiving now spans the life cycle of all families from the care of a newborn, to a sick loved one, an aging family member, and the employee's own health. Giving people 12 weeks of paid leave will remove the stress and burden of taking an unpaid day off, which might mean job termination. No one should ever be asked to make that choice, yet too many workers who need time off often do so at the expense of their own financial well-being.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB539.