



SB 539 Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment
Senate Finance Committee
February 27th, 2020
SUPPORT

Chairwomen Kelley, Vice Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 539. This bill would establish a leave program so employees will have access to paid leave, in order to care for themselves or family members.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy.

Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) is a federal program that provides insurance to employees that work for a covered employer. However, this is not an option for many employees in Maryland. This means that they have limited or no options when it comes to taking paid leave. Some employees have access to unpaid leave, while others risk being fired for taking leave. Maryland has partially addressed limited aspects of this issue through the Flexible Leave Act and Parental Leave Act.¹

When employees encounter health related hardships they experience high levels of mental, emotional, and physical stress. This stress is increased by the demands of work and the inability to stop working to appropriately address concerns. Decision making, healing, and financial stability are compromised when employees do not have adequate options to navigate difficult times.

SB 539 will help alleviate stress by supporting:

- Parents caring for a newborn child or child newly placed for adoption or foster care.
- Workers caring for a family member with a serious health condition or disability.
- Workers caring for a military service member who is next of kin or those who have specified a need resulting from the military deployment of a family member.
- Workers who have a serious health condition that makes them unable to do their job.

A Family and Medical Leave Insurance program would benefit individuals and families by protecting workers who need to stay home to care for themselves or family members. They would not lose vital income, which could leave low to moderate income families to face housing instability, accumulation of debt, and inability to build long-term wealth and assets. Ensuring that employees can safely take time off, will ensure that Maryland employees will not have to choose between their own or their family's health and maintaining their economic security.

For these reasons, we encourage you to return a favorable report on SB 539.

¹ <http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/HHS/2017-Report-of-the-Task-Force-to-Study-Family-and-Medical-Leave-Insurance.pdf>