

HB 1326 Worker Sick Leave Account

Flor, District 3A

My name is Flor De Maria Garay. I am here today to testify on behalf of my mother who lives and works in Frederick, Maryland, District 3A. She provides homecare care support for a Development Disability Employer. She really enjoys her job helping clients with intellectual and developmental disabilities which I really admire about my mom.

We had a scary situation in January. My mother tested positive for COVID-19 exactly on the first week of January, after the federal law that provided for paid sick leave to workers who contracted or were exposed to COVID-19 expired. While sick from COVID-19 experiencing all the related symptoms, she called me to ask for help because she didn't know if she qualified for any available paid sick leave law. So, we immediately informed her employer about the positive result and asked for leave under the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act or Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Her employer responded that she only had 12 hours of sick leave available through Healthy Working Families Act, so that meant she had less than two workdays to quarantine and recover from COVID-19 before she lost job protection.

Worse, my grandmother tested positive shortly before my mother did. Because my grandmother was staying with my mother at the time, she was the only care provider for my grandmother. My grandmother is 86 years old and at high risk for a severe illness from COVID-19. Despite my mother being sick with COVID-19 herself and my grandmother almost at the brink of death, my mother was able to provide her with sufficient enough care to allow my grandmother to recover. As result of having to take care of my grandmother, my mother's symptoms prolonged.

It was not until early February that my mother recovered and was able to return to work. This was a scary experience for our family. My mother is blessed and lucky to have made it through, but it was difficult to do so without a paycheck and any of the job protections. What happened to my mother is just one example of the many workers who currently do not have enough leave to stay home to care for themselves or their loved ones. I know Maryland can do better to protect for our working families.

It is why I am urging for a favorable report on HB 1326 because although the current Healthy Working Families Act has helped some, it is not enough time for any worker or family relative to completely recover from COVID-19, and absolutely won't be enough time if that same worker gets sick again from anything else this year. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Flor De Maria Garay