



ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE
House Bill 1326
Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Revisions and Public Health
Emergency Leave
March 2, 2021
Urging a Favorable Report With Amendment
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Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 1326. The University System of Maryland (USM) supports this bill with an amendment that would exempt employees of the twelve USM constituent institutions.

This bill expands the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act to require employers to provide additional leave to covered employees during a declared public health emergency. Full-time employees would be granted 112 hours, or almost 4 weeks, of additional leave. The leave could be used if the employee or their family member is ill, needs to isolate, needs to seek preventive medical care or treatment, or the employee needs to care for dependents when schools or childcare providers are closed.

These purposes closely track the various reasons employees from all sectors have needed to be absent from work during the covid pandemic. Providing sufficient sick leave to protect employees from loss of pay during a public health emergency is important. Such protections are already in place for USM institution employees. Those employees currently have access to multiple forms of leave that have allowed them to be absent, with pay, as necessary during the covid pandemic for the same reasons mentioned in HB 1326. The categories of leave available to USM employees include sick and safe leave, advanced sick leave, extended sick leave, family and parental leave, collegial leave, and reserve fund leave. Also, following formal guidance from the USM Chancellor's Office, USM institutions have permitted employees to use leave like that required by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act through June 30, even though the deadline for using the federally mandated leave expired December 30th. As a result, USM institution employees are protected from loss of pay when they need to be absent to care for themselves or families members during the pandemic.

For these reasons, the USM supports House Bill 1326 with an amendment that would exempt USM institution employees from coverage.

