

Testimony Concerning HB 52
“State Employees - Parental Bereavement Leave”
Submitted to the House Appropriations Committee
January 30, 2024

Position: Favorable

Good Afternoon,

I'm Lauren Reider. I live and work in AACo for the Department of Social Services under the purview of the Maryland Department of Human Services. I graduated with my MSW from UMB in 2014 and have worked for DSS for the last 9.5 years. I supervise 7 staff members who go into families homes following a CPS investigation to ensure permanency & wellbeing for children while assessing their safety in their home environment.

Just over a year ago, I gave birth to my son Noah who was immediately taken to the PCICU at Hopkins where he lived for 20 days, receiving two surgical procedures. I can count on one hand how many times I was allowed to hold my baby, one of them being the 2 hours leading up to his death. The minute this heart stopped beating was the minute I no longer qualified for the 8.5 weeks of parental leave I had been approved for.

Despite the fact that I had given birth just like all other mothers, the only leave I qualified for was 3 days of bereavement leave. Why is a grieving mother expected to return to work after 3 days while a mother whose baby lives is allowed up to 12 weeks of paid leave?

Sure, I could've used my sick leave, but I wasn't sick - I was grieving - and what would I have done when I got sick? It would have been irresponsible for me to return to the job I do for DSS in the devastated state I was in only after 3 days. Noah's funeral wasn't even planned after 3 days. Take a minute to really think about that. I think you all know what the right answer is and what needs to happen next. Lead the charge and make this change.

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