



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony

County Council Bill 10-22: Personnel and Human Resources – Paid Parental Leave

July 12, 2022

Good afternoon. My name is Zelda Wafer-Jones and I am the Vice Chair of the Community Action Board. As advocates for the low-income community, the Community Action Board strongly supports Council Bill 10-22. Our board's longtime priorities have included policies and programs such as the EITC, childcare subsidies, and work supports that help people move towards self-sufficiency. We applaud the County's efforts to increase the minimum wage, "ban the box" on employment applications, and to require paid sick and safe leave. Policy changes such as these help people find employment that pays a living wage and maintain such employment.

Guaranteeing 240 hours of paid parental leave for County employees as this bill does, will provide a critical support to our workforce. While the County's current parental leave policy allows for up to 720 hours of time off following the birth or adoption of a child, employees must use their own accumulated leave. If an employee has no paid leave left, their only option is to use unpaid leave or simply return to work much sooner than they might have preferred. This is a difficult situation for a new parent who wishes to spend more time bonding with their child and may also be recovering physically from childbirth. As well, new parents may be facing new financial burdens. Our Board does not believe employees should have to choose between spending time with their new child and receiving an income.

We greatly appreciate that County Government employment already provides numerous benefits and for many, a living wage. This is extremely important here in Montgomery County where the Self-Sufficiency Standard, which measures the actual cost of living in a given geographic location for a certain family type, is more than \$103,000 for a family of three with one working adult, one infant, and one preschooler. We also note that this is an equity issue because in all areas of employment, 31% of women, 44% of African Americans, and 54% of Hispanic County residents have incomes below the Self-Sufficiency Standard.¹

We strongly encourage the County Council to pass this bill. We are proud that Montgomery County has been on the forefront for so many policies, often leading the way for other jurisdictions and for the state. Just as the County's initial living wage legislation and minimum wage legislation have expanded over time, we hope that this bill will lead to additional expansions of work supports for all employees in the County.

¹ <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/>