



COMMISSION ON AGING

Montgomery County Commission on Aging
Testimony in Support of HB 580
Maryland Healthy Working Families Act
House Economic Matters Committee

February 13, 2016

Introduction

My name is Paul DelPonte and I serve on the Montgomery County Commission on Aging. The Commission supports HB 580, the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act as a way to assist both older workers and the increasing needs of family caregivers. Last year, Montgomery County adopted a similar provision. The Commission believes it is the right policy for the State of Maryland, and one of several efforts that will help prepare our state for the aging boom.

Background

In the summer of 2014, the Commission on Aging studied the needs of family caregivers. This is an issue that affects all people. The impact is seen across generations, especially as working people are facing caring for their children while they are also caring for an aging parent. Providing a modest amount of paid sick leave, as this legislation does, will help support healthy families by providing some workplace and economic stability when someone gets sick.

The District of Columbia, California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island all provide four to six weeks of paid family leave. Connecticut and Massachusetts also recently enacted paid sick leave laws. San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, New York City, Jersey City, and Newark have also enacted paid sick leave statutes. This legislation is an opportunity for Maryland to be on the forefront of strengthening families and workers.

Studies of the impact of these laws have found beneficial effects for employees and their families with little or no harmful effects on business or the economy. For example, the District of Columbia's Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act of 2008 extended paid sick days to 307,000 private sector workers. A 2013 audit by the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor found no evidence that the law caused businesses to leave the city or discouraged new businesses from opening in the District. In 2013, the D.C. City Council expanded the law to cover 20,000 tipped restaurant and bar workers.

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Providing access to paid sick and family leave has a larger positive impact on the economy as a whole above and beyond the benefits to any single business. When an employee comes to work sick and passes his or her illness on to a customer, this hurts the productivity of other families and businesses. For older people and others with weakened immune systems, this can have costly and sometimes life threatening consequences. When a woman drops out of the labor force because she cannot take paid time off for the birth of a child, it not only harms her employer, it is bad for the economy to lose her talents. If a daughter is going to work stressed because she had to leave an ailing parent at home alone, she is not being productive on the job.

Conclusion

Providing paid sick leave is healthy for both families and businesses. It enhances the work-life balance that will move the Maryland economy forward in the 21st Century. It will help us to compete with our neighboring jurisdiction in the District of Columbia. The inter-generational nature of this legislation will help achieve our county and state goals of becoming a community for a lifetime. For those, and other reasons, the Montgomery County Commission on Aging is please to support HB 580, the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act.