



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 91
Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee
Wednesday, September 25, 2019

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Hottinger, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 91, which establishes the Family Medical Leave Insurance Program. This program would allow for workers to continue earning a percentage of their paycheck while they take time off to care for a newborn, a newly-adopted or newly-placed foster child, a family member with a serious illness or to address their own medical condition.

Since the passage of The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, Ohio has not made any significant strides to bring guaranteed, legally-protected paid leave to all families. Only 13% of workers have access to paid family leave and that drops to a mere 4% among low-wage workers. The goal of this legislation is to elevate the conversation around this crucial need for Ohio families.

The Family Medical Leave Insurance Program will support family stability and reduce gender and economic disparities. Supporting Ohio families will lead to a healthier economy and a more productive, family-friendly workforce. To date, California, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Washington, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia have passed paid family leave laws.

Under the proposed legislation, workers would be provided up to 12 weeks of family and medical leave during a 12 month period at partial pay. To be eligible, employees must have worked at least 680 hours and contributed to premiums to the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund for at least one year. Funding for the program is provided entirely by the employee through premiums deducted from their wages.

Through this program, businesses would bear no financial cost and employees have the ability to opt out of the program. Economists have found that with paid leave, more people take time off, particularly low-income parents who may have taken no leave or dropped out of the work force after giving birth. Paid leave raises the probability that mothers return to employment later, work more hours and subsequently earn higher wages.

I ask members of the committee for favorable passage of SB 91 on behalf of Ohio's families and children. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.