



January 28, 2021

Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn
900 E. Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: Pass HB 2016 Paid family and medical leave program; Virginia Employment Commission required to establish

Dear Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn and Members of the House of Delegates:

I am a Richmond-based small business owner and employer, with a branch office in Washington, DC. My business, Sustainable Design Consulting, provides innovative design solutions for a sustainable future and employs about 20 people at any given time. Thank you for the opportunity to share comments with you regarding HB 2016 by Delegate Hala Ayala, which would establish a state-run paid family and medical leave insurance program. Such a program would greatly benefit my small business and many others across the state of Virginia.

I know firsthand that small business owners want to offer competitive benefits like paid leave to their employees to attract and retain employees. A state-run paid leave insurance program would achieve this by making my staff happier and more productive, in turn, boosting my bottom line. Furthermore, as the DC Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act has recently generated a paid leave benefit for my Washington office employees, I would prefer to have a comparable program in Virginia to reestablish benefit parity between my two locations, as long as that program takes into account the needs of small businesses like mine.

I'm not alone in my support for a paid family leave program: more than two-thirds (66%)¹ of Virginia small business owners think it's important to establish a state-run program. As it is, I already spend a large portion of my day resolving human resources issues rather than working on building and maintaining my actual business. Having a state-run program would save me a lot of headache and hassle on the HR front by making it easy to facilitate access to this benefit for my employees.

Small businesses are our state's job creators and the backbone of our economy. When our businesses thrive, so do our communities, but we need help getting our employees the time they need to take care of a new baby, an ailing relative or their own health after childbirth. I ask that you consider small business needs when making your decision to establish a paid family medical leave program in Virginia.

I look forward to contributing my small business perspective in the rollout of this critical program.

Sincerely,

Sandra Leibowitz, Owner
Sustainable Design Consulting, LLC

¹ Small Business Majority, "Virginia small business owns say government doesn't understand their concerns, need help with healthcare costs and other challenges." August 2019. <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/sites/default/files/research-reports/081419-VA-Small-Business-Policy-Solutions-Poll.pdf>