



January 28, 2020

House Labor and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee #1
Pocahontas Building, House Committee Room
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: Small business support of paid family and medical leave (HB 825)

Dear Chairman Bagby and members of the Subcommittee:

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 total at any given time. Over the past few years, I have worked with Small Business Majority, a national small business education and advocacy organization that engages small business owners in support of public policy solutions and provides free resources to a network of 58,000 business owners. Thank you for the opportunity to share comments with you regarding HB 825 by Del. Carroll Foy, 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 their employees paid family leave but do not have the kinds of resources that larger companies have to offer such a benefit. Not only do our employees suffer from not having access to paid family leave, but so do our businesses. When my business can't afford to offer competitive benefits, I have a hard time competing in the job market with larger firms that can, and therefore, I struggle to attract and maintain a skilled workforce. However, a state-run paid leave insurance program could fix 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 place for my Richmond office employees to re-establish benefit parity between my two locations.

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 too large a 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Leibowitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Sandra Leibowitz, Owner
Sustainable Design Consulting, LLC

¹ Small Business Majority (2019, August 14) *Virginia small business owners say government doesn't understand their concerns, need help with healthcare costs and other challenges.* <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/sites/default/files/research-reports/081419-VA-Small-Business-Policy-Solutions-Poll.pdf>