

January 31, 2022

Senator Richard L. Saslaw
Chairman of Senate Commerce and Labor Committee
900 E. Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: Support SB 1, Paid family and medical leave program; Virginia Employment Commission required to establish.

Dear Chairman Saslaw and members of the Committee:

We urge you to support SB 1, which would require the Virginia Employment Commission to establish and administer a paid family and medical leave program. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of accessing paid family and medical leave. Now more than ever, there is a need for a modernized and robust benefits infrastructure, which would greatly benefit small business owners and their employees.

Under the program, benefits are paid to eligible employees for family and medical leave. Funding for the program is provided through premiums assessed to employers and employees beginning in 2024. The amount of a benefit is 80 percent of the employee's average weekly wage, not to exceed 80 percent of the state weekly wage, which amount is required to be adjusted annually to reflect changes in the statewide average weekly wage. The measure caps the duration of paid leave at 12 weeks in any application year. The bill provides self-employed individuals the option of participating in the program.

[Our research](#) found that 73% of small business owners support programs providing access to paid medical leave and 67% support access to parental leave. We have learned from the more than 2,500 business owners in our Virginia network that they desire to offer benefits to their employees because it helps them retain staff and compete with larger competitors. That's why [66%](#) of Virginia small business owners support establishing a state-run paid family and medical leave program. Passing SB 1 will bolster the Virginia small business ecosystem by providing them access to the benefits they need to attract a robust workforce.

We urge you and the other members of the committee to vote yes on SB 1 to create a paid family and medical leave program and support the small business community.

Sincerely,

Awesta Sarkash
Government Affairs Director
Small Business Majority