Thank you, Madame Vice Chair and committee members.

I’m Nicole Christian, President & CEO of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, here on behalf of our 600 members in opposition to HB 375.

The Family & Medical Leave Insurance bill, or FAMLI, is onerous & unnecessary legislation.

Although, the payments to the FAMLI fund would be split equally between employers and employees, it is yet another tax on employers.

The current federal Family & Medica Leave Act creates additional costs to businesses as they have to hire temporary workers or pay overtime to current employees.

There are no cost-savings for an employee being out on FAMLI.

FAMLI unnecessarily expands FMLA.

Current FMLA law is limited to employers with 50 or more employees.

FAMLI would expand the program to all Maryland Employers, including small businesses and non-profits that have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic.

FMLA was created to provide employees job protections if they have to take an extended leave.

It was not designed to pay the employee for that leave.

FAMLI also expands employee eligibility.

To be eligible for FMLA, an employee must work 1250 hours in the preceding 12-month period, where this bill only requires an employee work 680 hours.

Maryland’s program should not require less qualifying hours than the federal program.

The Legislature should also consider the additional encumbrance on Maryland’s Unemployment Insurance Division.
The UI office is completely overwhelmed due to the pandemic and adding the creation and administration of a new program will exacerbate the existing strain on the Division’s resources.

The State administrative costs and program contributions are exorbitant and prohibitive.

Not only is this tax being considered, but huge mandated business expenses are also being deliberated in the form of the Essential Workers’ Act which will require hazard pay, financial aid for health care, and additional sick leave.

In the past three years, businesses have been hit with a minimum wage increase, mandated paid sick leave, and the pandemic.

It all adds up.

Businesses need help not more taxes.

Please give 375 an **UNFAVORABLE report**.