



**Testimony for the House Economic Matters Committee
February 28, 2014**

**HB 1026 Labor and Employment - Unpaid Parental Leave - Birth or
Adoption of a Child**

SUPPORT

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The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 1026, which establishes a reasonable unpaid leave policy for the birth or adoption of an employee's child.

Currently 46.4% of Marylanders are not covered under federal or state law for parental leave.¹ Of Marylanders not covered under any current parental leave law, 24.5% work for businesses that have between 15 and 50 employees and would therefore be covered by HB 1026.

No worker should have to lose his or her job for taking time off when he or she has a child, especially at a time when families' finances are stretched and jobs can be hard to find. This bill provides a logical path for ensuring healthy families while maintaining economic stability.

Women make up nearly half the labor force.² Many working women are single and are the family's primary breadwinner. They are disproportionately low-income women, often in physically demanding jobs with little flexibility. Being fired can have devastating consequences for women, particularly women of color. In many families, women of color are the primary source of financial support. More than three million African American families with children have a female head of household—most often a mother, grandmother or other relative who is her family's only source of support.³ The same is true for more than two million Latino families.⁴

Particularly in tough economic times, job or income loss can cause workers and their families to fall into poverty and turn to public assistance and public programs that cost taxpayers money.

¹ Quarterly Census of Employment and Behavior, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

² National Partnership for Women and Families, *Working Women Need Paid Sick Days*, pg. 1 (Oct. 2012) ("Women Need Paid Sick Days Report").

³ National Partnership for Women and Families, *Women of Color Need Paid Sick Days Standard*, pg. 1 (Oct. 2012) ("Women of Color Report").

⁴ *Women of Color Report*, pg. 1.

Parental leave is cost-effective for individual employers because it reduces costs for recruitment and retraining, and increases commitment and motivation among employees.⁵

This bill also helps avoid unnecessary health care expenses by allowing parents to care for a new child. Without the proper care a child must obtain at birth, it could potentially lead to major health problems — and higher medical costs — down the line.⁶

Too many families can't access the time they need to care for their new children. When a family has a child or adopts a child, they may face impossible choices between the health of their new child and economic stability. No family should have to choose between caring for a baby and a job. HB 1026 will help resolve this problem.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1026.

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⁵ Institute for Women's and Policy Research, *Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption leave in the United States* (May 2011).

⁶ For instance, breastfeeding and the use of human milk have shown to optimize infant, child, and adult health as well as child growth and development. Recently, published evidence-based studies have confirmed the risks of not breastfeeding, and concluded that breastfeeding should be seen as a "basic health issue" and "is essential and vital for the achievement of this preferred public health goal." American Academy of Pediatrics, *Pediatrics: the Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk*, pg. 12 (Feb. 27, 2012), available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/02/22/peds.2011-3552>.