

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD BEFORE THE
VIRGINIA HOUSE COMMERCE AND ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE #4
ON HOUSE BILL 2035: PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM; VIRGINIA
EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION REQUIRED TO ESTABLISH**

January 24, 2023

Quintin Reed

Small Business Majority

Dear Chairwoman Byron and other Members of the Committee:

My name is Quintin Reed, the Government Affairs Coordinator for Small Business Majority, a small business organization with offices nationwide, including here in Virginia. Our mission is to empower America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. Today I am testifying to express our support for House Bill 2035, legislation that will require the Virginia Employment Commission to establish and administer a paid family and a medical leave program. This proposal would allow small business owners to offer additional benefits to their workforce, helping them attract and retain skilled workers and compete in this labor market.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of accessing paid family and medical leave. Nationwide, we're seeing other states passing measures to implement state-run paid family and medical leave programs. A modernized and robust benefits infrastructure would benefit small business owners and their employees, helping to level the playing field for small employers that can't afford to provide paid family leave on their own.

Under the program, benefits are paid to eligible employees for family and medical leave. The program would be funded through modest employer and employee contributions, which would be assessed beginning in 2025. What's more, the proposal would also allow self-employed individuals to opt in into the program, which can support the [overwhelming majority \(80%\)](#) of Virginia's entrepreneurs.

Implementing a paid family and medical leave program is a commonsense policy solution that small businesses can get behind. A Small Business Majority [survey](#) found that a majority of small business owners support programs providing access to paid medical leave (73%) and parental leave (67%). Virginia small businesses [want to offer benefits to their employees](#) because it helps them retain staff and compete with larger competitors, which is why 66% of Virginia small business owners support establishing a state-run paid family and medical leave program. Passing HB 2035 will bolster the Virginia small business ecosystem by providing them access to the benefits they need to attract a robust workforce.

We urge you to vote yes on HB 2035 to create a paid family and medical leave program in the Commonwealth to support the small business community.

Thank you,

Quintin Reed
Government Affairs Coordinator
Small Business Majority