Please view our Healthy Families Act fact sheet here, and our section-by-section here.

June 15, 2023

Dear Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to co-sponsor the Healthy Families Act, which would create a national paid sick and safe days standard.

The Healthy Families Act would guarantee working people the ability to earn up to seven paid sick days a year to recover from short-term illnesses, access preventive care, care for a sick family member or seek assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Workers at places of employment with fewer than 15 employees would earn seven unpaid, job-protected sick days. Without paid sick days, workers are forced to make impossible choices when illness strikes: stay home, lose pay and risk their jobs; or go to work sick, jeopardize their health and spread illness to their co-workers and communities. Paid sick and safe days help keep families financially secure, workplaces and communities healthy and productive, and businesses and the economy strong. A permanent national paid sick days standard is an essential part of a just recovery from the pandemic.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the consequences faced by working people, public health and our economy when workers lack access to paid sick days. As of February 2023, 1.3 million adults in the United States were not working because they were either sick with coronavirus symptoms, or caring for someone who was also experiencing coronavirus symptoms. And the long-term health and caregiving consequences of COVID-19 are just beginning to surface. An estimated 10 to 33 million adults in the United States are affected by long COVID symptoms, which can interfere with the ability to work or require care from a loved one, and rates of long COVID are elevated among transgender people, cisgender women, and Latinx and multiracial people. Workers in low-paid “frontline” and essential jobs, including at grocery stores, and in child care and health care, disproportionately women of color, are doubly impacted, facing higher rates of infection and death in part due to workplace exposure, and less access to protective measures like paid sick days. More than half of Latinx workers – an estimated 16 million people – as well as 47 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native workers and 38 percent of Black workers are unable to earn a single paid sick day. At the same time, women of color are also bearing the brunt


of job losses while shouldering increased caregiving responsibilities that have pushed millions of women out of the workforce entirely.

**Paid sick days have been proven to benefit public health and flatten the curve of infection during an emergency.** Research has long shown that workers without paid sick days are more likely to come to work sick or injured, and are less able to stay home and recover. The benefits of a national standard were proven by the implementation of an emergency paid sick days program in April 2020: states where workers gained new access to paid sick days through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) saw 400 fewer coronavirus cases per state per day, with a national impact of 15,000 fewer cases per day. Paid sick leave laws reduce mortality among working-age people.

**Fourteen states, including the District of Columbia, and 35 other jurisdictions have or will soon have paid sick days laws in place in the United States.** A strong, growing body of evidence from jurisdictions that have had laws in place for years shows that paid sick days benefit workers, families and public health. These studies also show virtually no adverse effects – and some positive effects – on businesses and local economies.

Despite substantial increases in access to paid sick days as a result of new laws, nearly one-quarter of the private sector workforce in the United States – nearly 30 million people – cannot earn paid sick days to use when they get sick. Millions more cannot earn time to care for a sick child or family member. Lower-wage workers, workers of color and hourly workers are least likely to have access to paid sick time.

**Unpaid, unprotected days off have stark consequences for working families.** For a family without paid sick days, just 3.3 days of lost pay due to illness are equivalent to the family’s entire monthly health care budget, and 4.5 days are equivalent to an entire month of food. Nearly one-quarter of U.S. adults (23 percent) report they have lost a job or have been threatened with job loss for taking time off work due to illness or to care for a sick child or

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11 Ibid.


Paid sick days make business and economic sense. When sick workers are able to stay home, the spread of disease slows and workplaces are both healthier and more productive. Paid sick days also reduce “presenteeism,” the productivity lost when employees work sick, which is estimated to cost our national economy approximately $270.8 billion annually and surpasses the cost of absenteeism. In Washington state, a paid sick days law cut the share of retail and food service workers who reported working while sick by eight percentage points. Paid sick days also reduce workplace injuries: Workers who earn paid sick days are 28 percent less likely than workers who don’t earn paid sick days to be injured on the job, and research from Connecticut shows that enacting a paid sick days law reduces occupational injuries — with the greatest difference among workers in high-risk occupations.

Ensuring all workers can earn paid sick days would significantly reduce health care expenditures. People without paid sick days are more likely to incur high health care expenses and are more likely to seek treatment at an emergency department because they can’t take time off to get care during regular business hours. If all workers had paid sick days, 1.3 million emergency room visits could be prevented each year, saving $1.1 billion annually. More than half of these savings — $517 million — would accrue to taxpayer-funded health insurance programs, such as Medicare, Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program. Workers with paid sick days are more likely to get regular cancer screenings and preventive care, holding down health care costs and improving long-term health.

Paid sick days enable working parents to care for their children when they are sick — shortening recovery time and reducing community contagion. Parents without paid sick days are nearly twice as likely as parents with paid sick days to send a sick child to school or day care.

20 See note 16. [Smith & Kim]
22 Ibid.
24 See note 18.
When parents have no choice but to do so, children’s health and educational attainment is put at risk — as is the health of classmates, teachers, school staff and child care providers. Women are disproportionately affected by the nation’s lack of paid sick days, which jeopardizes the economic stability of families increasingly dependent on women’s wages. Women make up nearly half the workforce\(^{25}\) and mothers are breadwinners in nearly half of families with children under 18, including 48 percent of Latina mothers, 79 percent of Black mothers, 64 percent of Native American mothers and 43 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander mothers as well as 48 percent of white mothers.\(^{26}\) Yet, overwhelmingly, mothers still have primary responsibility for selecting their children’s doctors, accompanying children to appointments and getting them recommended care. In 2017, 4 in 10 employed mothers (40 percent) said they alone must miss work when a sick child needs to stay home, compared to 10 percent of working fathers. Among these mothers, 56 percent were not paid when they take that time.\(^{27}\)

Like paid sick days, paid “safe” days are critical for workers’ productivity, security and well-being. In a 2018 survey of domestic violence survivors, nearly three-fourths (73 percent) reported that financial problems forced them to remain with their abusers longer than they wanted or to return after having left, and more than half (53 percent) said they lost a job because of the abuse.\(^{28}\) Because survivors of domestic violence are at increased risk of harm during and shortly after separating from an abusive partner,\(^{29}\) it is essential that they be able to find shelter, file restraining orders, attend court dates or receive counseling to prevent further abuse and continue working.

Without an inclusive paid sick days standard, America’s diverse workforce cannot meet its family caregiving needs. More than 80 percent of households today do not fit the so-called nuclear family model (a married couple living together with minor children).\(^{30}\) For example, 1 in 5 people (about 64 million nationwide) live in a multigenerational household, and people of color are especially likely to do so.\(^{31}\) In part as a result of opioid-related substance use disorder and our lack of adequate policies to address it, nearly 3 million children are living with grandparents.\(^{32}\) Among LGBTQ people, 37 percent of workers, and 43 percent of LGBTQ women and LGBTQ workers with disabilities, reported not having access to paid sick leave at their current employer. Twenty-nine percent reported that they would be most likely to turn to a partner to whom they are not legally married for care if they needed to.

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take time off work for health-related reasons, including share that rises to 32 percent for respondents of color.\textsuperscript{33} And, whether due to small family size, living a great distance from relatives, or even divorce or estrangement from a birth family, many adults – in fact, nearly one-third of people in the United States – report having needed to care for a friend, neighbor or other person who does not have a legal tie.\textsuperscript{34} Coverage for these “chosen family” members, which is included in paid sick leave laws in New Jersey, Arizona and New Mexico\textsuperscript{35} as well as numerous other jurisdictions, is particularly important for LGBTQ people, people with disabilities,\textsuperscript{36} and servicemembers and veterans: around 15 percent of caregivers for pre-9/11 veterans and nearly one-quarter (23.4 percent) of post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans are friends or neighbors.\textsuperscript{37} The Healthy Families Act intentionally defines family members, partners, and children inclusively, acknowledging the different caregiving relationships across society.

The Healthy Families Act would strengthen workers and families businesses and the economy. It would guarantee workers access across the country the right to earn paid sick and safe days no matter where they live, bringing the rest of the United States in line with the states and cities that have passed these laws and much of the rest of the world.

We urge you to demonstrate your strong commitment to our nation’s working families by co-sponsoring the Healthy Families Act and advocating for support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

National
1,000 Days
A Better Balance
A. Phillip Randolph Institute
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Muslim Health Professionals
American Public Health Association
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
Asset Building Strategies
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA
BiNet USA
Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy
Caring Across Generations

\textsuperscript{35} New Mexico’s bill has passed the legislature and is awaiting signature by the Governor.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
Center for American Progress  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for Economic and Policy Research  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Center for the Repair of Historic Harms of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, PC (USA)  
Child Care Aware® of America  
Children’s Defense Fund  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Family Equality  
Family Values @ Work  
Family Values @ Work Action  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Futures Without Violence  
Human Impact Partners  
Human Rights Campaign  
Institute for Women’s Policy Research  
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility  
International Brotherhood Of Teamsters (ibt)  
Ipas  
Jewish Women International  
Justice for Migrant Women  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Main Street Alliance  
March of Dimes  
MomsRising  
Movement Advancement Project  
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Community Reinvestment Coalition  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Institute for Workers’ Rights  
National Military Family Association (NMFA)  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National WIC Association  
National Women’s Law Center  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Oxfam America
Paid Leave for All
ParentsTogether
PFLAG National
Prosperity Now
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Sojourners
T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Teamsters
The Arc of the United States
The Collaborative
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The National Domestic Violence Hotline
The National Network to End Domestic Violence
Third Way
Trust for America’s Health
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW)
United for Respect
UsAgainstAlzheimer’s
USOW
Women of Reform Judaism
Workplace Fairness
Young Invincibles
YWCA USA

Alabama
AIDS Alabama

Arizona
United Food & Commercial Workers Local 99

California
BreastfeedLA
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
California Work & Family Coalition
Community Health Councils
Golden State Opportunity
Legal Aid at Work

Colorado
Clayton Early Learning

Connecticut
Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
Delaware
Delaware Cares Coalition for Paid Leave

District of Columbia
Jacobs Institute of Women's Health, The George Washington University

Georgia
Parent to Parent of Georgia

Hawaii
Hawaii State AFL-CIO

Illinois
POWER-PAC IL
Women Employed

Indiana
AAUW Indiana
AAUW Indianapolis
AAUW Valparaiso
Greater Indianapolis Multifaith Alliance (GIMA)
Indiana Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Indiana Community Action Association
Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute
Indiana Public Health Association
League of Women Voters of Fort Wayne
Sisters of St. Francis

Kansas
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Thrive Kansas

Maryland
Public Justice Center

Massachusetts
American Psychiatric Association Women's Caucus

Michigan
Michigan League for Public Policy

Missouri
Missouri Jobs with Justice

New Jersey
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Jersey Time to Care Coalition
New Mexico
Native Women Lead

New York
GLSEN
PepTalkHer
The New York Women's Foundation

North Carolina
North Carolina Justice Center

Ohio
The Women's Fund of Central Ohio

Pennsylvania
Children First PA
The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest PA
Women's Law Project

Rhode Island
Women's Fund of Rhode Island

South Carolina
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network

Texas
Every Texan

Washington
Economic Opportunity Institute