

Back-to-School Toolkit

Sample Letter to Elected Official(s)

Dear **[Elected Official Name]**,

As a **[city/state name]** resident and **[parent/teacher/community member]** in the **[name of school district]**, I'm concerned that in the United States only one in four workers can take paid time off to be home to care for a child, especially in the middle of a pandemic. As our kids and teachers head back to school amidst an extraordinarily contagious Delta variant of COVID-19, now is the time to advance the Healthy Families Act.

Paid sick leave reduces overall health care costs and improves families' financial security while promoting public health. **In [state name], only [% of workers who were able to take paid time off to be home to care for a child] of workers were recently able to take paid time off to be home to care for a child when there was a childcare interruption.** This means that when a child has a cold, the flu, a fever, a rash or even COVID-19, many parents are forced to choose between caring for that child or protecting their own jobs and financial security by sending them to school or childcare. This has real consequences for the health and well-being of our children and communities: when children go to school sick, they may struggle academically, get sicker and spread illness to their classmates, teachers and staff.

The good news is that there is a solution: a national proposal, known as the Healthy Families Act. This legislation would create a much-needed paid sick days standard in the U.S. that would allow workers to earn up to seven days of paid time away from work to recover from illness, care for a sick child, seek preventive and routine care for themselves or a family member or seek assistance in cases of domestic violence.

Paid sick days protect children's health and education. When working parents can earn paid sick days, they are more likely to keep a sick child home to properly recover – instead of having to send the child to school and risk spreading illness. The ability to earn paid sick days also allows parents to get their children the routine preventive care and immunizations they need to stay healthy. For the parents of children with chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes, having paid sick days makes it easier to manage these conditions and prevent longer school absences.

A growing body of evidence shows that paid sick days benefit businesses and the economy. [Studies](#) of the longest-standing state and municipal laws show that most employers are supportive of and have not had difficulty complying with paid sick days standards. In these jurisdictions, job and business growth have continued and, in some cases, even outpaced growth in surrounding areas. Research has shown that paid sick leave is associated with cost *savings* for employers, improved employee retention, a healthier and more productive workforce and overall job growth.

Support is growing for this common sense policy among state and local lawmakers and the public. To date, 14 states and over a dozen cities and counties have put laws in place that guarantee working people the right to earn paid sick days. In 2020, a temporary national paid

sick days standard was enacted for the first time to help address the coronavirus pandemic. Eighty-two percent of voters support a permanent paid sick days law.

So, now, as our kids head back to school, [I/organization name], schools and families in [city/state name] are counting on your support. Please ensure the Healthy Families Act is passed as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

[Full name]