

September 24, 2015

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to support the Healthy Families Act (S. 497/H.R. 932), a common sense bill that would allow workers to earn up to seven paid sick days a year to recover from short-term illnesses like the flu, access preventive care, care for a sick family member or seek assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. 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, risk their health and spread disease to their co-workers and communities. Paid sick days keep families financially secure, workplaces and communities healthy and productive, and businesses and the economy strong.

At least 43 million private sector workers in the United States cannot earn paid sick days to use when they get sick.¹ Millions more cannot earn time to care for a sick child or family member.² Unpaid days off have real consequences. For a family without paid sick days, on average, 3.1 days of pay lost to illness are equivalent to the family's entire monthly health care budget, and 3.5 days are equivalent to its entire monthly grocery budget.³

Lack of paid sick days is acute in jobs requiring frequent contact with the public — with potentially grave public health consequences. Less than a quarter (24 percent) of employees in food preparation and service related occupations have access to sick days with pay,⁴ and just 27 percent of child care workers have access to paid sick time.⁵ Without paid sick days, workers are forced to take unpaid leave or work sick. In the restaurant industry, the result is that nearly two-thirds of servers and cooks report that they have served or cooked while ill.⁶ This puts workers, customers and businesses in danger.

21 states and localities across the country have adopted paid sick days laws that are or will soon go into effect – most of these passed in the last two years. Momentum at the state and local levels is undeniable, and all of the evidence from the jurisdictions with laws that have been in place for years show that paid sick days benefit workers and families without adverse effects – and, indeed, with positive effects – on businesses and local economies.⁷

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 \$160 billion annually and surpasses the cost of absenteeism.⁸ Paid sick days have also been shown to 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 – with an even greater difference among workers in high-risk occupations.⁹

Ensuring all workers can earn paid sick days will significantly reduce health care expenditures. People without paid sick days are more likely to seek treatment at an emergency department because they can't take time off to get care during regular business hours.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Workers with paid sick days are more likely to get regular cancer screenings and preventive care,¹² 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 child recovery time and reducing community contagion. Unfortunately, more than half of working parents are unable to earn even a few paid sick days to use to care for a sick child.¹³ Parents without paid sick days are more than twice as likely as parents with paid sick days to send a sick child to school or day care.¹⁴ 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 and child care providers.

Women are disproportionately impacted when they can’t access paid sick days, jeopardizing the economic stability of families who are increasingly dependent on women’s wages. Women make up nearly half the workforce and are primary or co-breadwinners in two-thirds of families.¹⁵ Yet overwhelmingly, mothers still have primary responsibility for selecting their children’s doctors, accompanying children to appointments and getting them recommended care.¹⁶ Moreover, nearly four in 10 working mothers (39 percent) say they alone must miss work when a sick child needs to stay home, compared to three percent of working men. Among these mothers, 60 percent do not get paid, up significantly from 45 percent in 2004.¹⁷ One-fifth of women workers report that they have lost a job or were told they would lose a job for taking time off due to personal or family illness.¹⁸

The Healthy Families Act would strengthen workers and families, businesses and the economy. It would guarantee workers across the country the right to earn paid sick 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 becoming a co-sponsor of the Healthy Families Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,

9to5

A Better Balance: The Work and Family Legal Center

African American Ministers In Action

African American Ministers Leadership Council

Alliance for Justice

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers

American Public Health Association

Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
ARCH National Respite Coalition
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Baby Café USA, Inc.
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Black Women's Roundtable
Black Women's Health Imperative
Business and Professional Women's Foundation (BPW)
Catalyst
Center for American Progress
Center for Community Change Action
Center for Effective Government
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Women Policy Studies
Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)
Coalition on Human Needs
Communications Workers of America, National Women's Committee, AFL-CIO
Demos
Disciples Home Missions, Disciples of Christ
El Centro de la Raza
Every Child Matters Education Fund
Family Equality Council
Family Values @ Work
Feminist Majority
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance
Human Impact Partners
Institute for Science and Human Values
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Jewish Labor Committee
Jewish Women International
Labor Project for Working Families
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Momentum
Make It Work
Mom-mentum
MomsRising.org
NAACP
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Consumers League
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO)
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
Parents as Teachers
Partnership for Working Families
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
RESULTS
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Social Security Works
Task Force on All Women's Economic Security (AWES), NCWO
The Arc
Trust for America's Health
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Steelworkers (USW)
USAction
Voter Participation Center
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women Donors Network
Women Employed
Women's Media Center
Women's Voices, Women Vote Action Fund
Working America
Working Partnerships USA
Young Invincibles
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE

ARKANSAS

Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center

CALIFORNIA

9to5 California
BreastfeedLA
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center

COLORADO

9to5 Colorado
FRESC: Good Jobs, Strong Communities

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Working Families

FLORIDA

Farmworker Association of Florida
Florida Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc.
Florida Consumer Action Network
South Florida Voices for Working Families

GEORGIA

9to5 Georgia
Georgia Rural Urban Summit
Parent to Parent of Georgia, Inc.

HAWAII

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Hawaii

IDAHO

United Action for Idaho

ILLINOIS

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Chicago Women's AIDS Project
Citizen Action Illinois
Federation of College Clerical and Technical Personnel, Local 1708, AFT, IFT, AFL-CIO
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
National Council of Jewish Women, Illinois State Policy Advocacy Network
ParentsWork
SEIU Healthcare Illinois Indiana

IOWA

Iowa Citizen Action Network

KENTUCKY

Lactation Improvement Network of Kentucky (LINK)

LOUISIANA

Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition

MAINE

Maine People's Alliance
Maine Women's Lobby

MARYLAND

Job Opportunities Task Force
National Organization for Women, Baltimore Chapter

National Organization for Women, Maryland Chapter
Progressive Maryland
Public Justice Center

MASSACHUSETTS

Coalition for Social Justice
Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action
New England Jewish Labor Committee

MICHIGAN

Michigan Citizen Action
Michigan League for Public Policy
National Organization for Women, Oakland/Macomb Michigan Chapter

MISSOURI

Communities Creating Opportunity
Missouri Progressive Vote Coalition

NEBRASKA

Voices for Children in Nebraska

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Citizens Alliance for Action

NEW JERSEY

American Association of University Women (AAUW) of New Jersey
Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey
Communications Workers of America (CWA), Local 1036
Displaced Homemakers Network of New Jersey
Family Voices NJ
Health Professionals & Allied Employees/AFT/AFL-CIO
National Council of Jewish Women, Union County NJ Section
National Organization for Women, New Jersey Chapter
National Organization for Women, Northern New Jersey Chapter
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women
New Jersey Policy Perspective
New Jersey State Industrial Union Council
New Jersey Tenants Organization
New Jersey Time to Care Coalition
New Jersey Working Families Alliance
Occupy Bergen County
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
United Methodist Women, Greater New Jersey Conference

NEW YORK

Citizen Action of New York
New York Paid Leave Coalition

Street Vendor Project

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Justice Center
Women AdvaNCe

OHIO

Progress Ohio

OREGON

Family Forward Oregon
National Organization for Women, Central Oregon Coast Chapter
Oregon Action

PENNSYLVANIA

Keystone Progress
PathWays PA
Women's Law Project

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Breastfeeding Coalition

TENNESSEE

Tennessee Citizen Action

VERMONT

Voices for Vermont's Children

VIRGINIA

National Organization for Women, Northern Virginia Chapter
Virginia Organizing

WASHINGTON

Economic Opportunity Institute
Faith Action Network
Legal Voice
National Organization for Women, Thurston County Chapter
National Organization for Women, Washington State Chapter
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA)
Puget Sound Sage
United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Local 21
Washington Community Action Network
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Washington Work and Family Coalition
YWCA Seattle | King | Snohomish

WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia Citizen Action Group

WISCONSIN

9to5 Wisconsin

Citizen Action of Wisconsin

Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups

1 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014, September). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2014* (Table 32). Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2014/ebb10055.pdf>

2 Smith, K. E., & Glauber, R. (2013). Exploring the spatial wage penalty for women: Does it matter where you live?. *Social science research*, 42(5), 1390-1401.

3 Gould, E., Filion, K., & Green, A. (2011, June 29). *The Need for Paid Sick Days: The lack of a federal policy further erodes family economic security*. Economic Policy Institute Publication. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://www.epi.org/page/-/BriefingPaper319.pdf?nocdn=1>

4 Institute for Women's Policy Research (2014). *Paid Sick Days Access in the United States: Differences by Race/Ethnicity, Occupation, Earnings, and Work Schedule*. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-access-in-the-united-states-differences-by-race-ethnicity-occupation-earnings-and-work-schedule/>

5 Joint Economic Committee, United States Congress. (2010, March). *Expanding Access to Paid Sick Leave: The Impact of the Healthy Families Act on America's Workers*. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from http://jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=abf8aca7-6b94-4152-b720-2d8d04b81ed6

6 Restaurant Opportunities Centers United. (2010, September 30). *Serving While Sick: High Risks and Low Benefits for the Nation's Restaurant Workforce, and Their Impact on the Consumer*. Restaurant Opportunities Centers United Publication. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://rocunited.org/roc-serving-while-sick/>

7 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2014, September). *Paid Sick Days: Low Cost, High Reward for Workers, Employers and Communities*. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-low-cost-high-reward.pdf>

8 Stewart, W. et al. (2003, December). Lost Productive Health Time Costs from Health Conditions in the United States: Results from the American Productivity Audit. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 45. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/lost-productive-work-time-american-productivity-audit.pdf>

9 Asfaw, A., et al. (2012, September). Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(9), e59-e64. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300482>

10 Smith, T., & Kim, J. (2010, June). *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*. National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Public Welfare Foundation Publication. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://news.uchicago.edu/static/newsengine/pdf/100621.paid.sick.leave.pdf>

11 Miller, K., Williams, C., & Yi, Y. (2011, October 31). *Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-and-health-cost-savings-from-reduced-emergency-department-visits/>

12 See note 9

13 Smith, K., & Schaefer, A. (2012, June). *Who Cares for the Sick Kids? Parents' Access to Paid Time to Care for a Sick Child*. Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire Publication. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/sites/carseyinstitute.unh.edu/files/publications/IB-Smith-Paid-Sick-Leave-2012.pdf>

14 See note 10

15 Glynn, S.J. (2014). *Breadwinning Mothers, Then and Now*. Center for American Progress Publication. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Glynn-Breadwinners-report-FINAL.pdf>

16 Ranji, U., & Salganicoff, A. (2014, October). *Balancing on Shaky Ground: Women, Work, and Family Health*. Kaiser Family Foundation Publication. Retrieved 6 February 2015, from <http://files.kff.org/attachment/balancing-on-shaky-ground-women-work-and-family-health-data-note>

17 *ibid.*

18 See note 10