

Tennesseans Need Paid Sick Days

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According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, an estimated 979,907 private sector workers in Tennessee, or 44.8 percent of the workforce, cannot earn a single paid sick day to use to recover from common illnesses or seek medical care.¹ Nationwide, more than 43 million private sector workers – nearly 40 percent of the workforce² – cannot earn paid sick time.

When workers do not have access to paid sick days, the consequences can be significant. For a typical family in the United States without paid sick days, for example, 3.5 days lost to illness are equivalent to the family's entire monthly grocery budget.³

Tennessee families need paid sick days to protect their financial stability, help maintain a strong state economy and promote their own good health and that of their communities.

By the Numbers

- ▶ **Nearly 950,000 children in Tennessee live in families in which all parents work**,⁴ yet too often parents cannot use the sick days they earn to care for their children.⁵ Nationally, parents without paid sick days are more than twice as likely to send a sick child to school or day care⁶, which can put the health of their child, their child's classmates and their teachers at risk.
- ▶ **Tennessee is home to more than 800,000 African American workers**⁷, who have disproportionately low access to paid sick days.⁸
- ▶ **More than 220,000 people in Tennessee work in restaurants**,⁹ an industry that requires frequent contact with the public but in which, nationally, 90 percent of workers cannot earn paid sick days.¹⁰ The health risks can be significant. Overall, workers without paid sick days are more likely to report going to work with a contagious illness and risk infecting others.¹¹

“When my children were young, I was told by my boss that my job came before everything else. I used to have to take a butt chewing if I needed to miss work because one of them was sick. It got to the point to where I had to take the kids to work with me sick and try to get the essential work done before I could take them to the doctor and then home. And, of course, I didn't get paid for those days, either. I used to go into a blind panic any time one of the kids got sick because I knew I was going to hear, once again, how my job came before anything else and I certainly couldn't afford to quit my job. Doing that would have meant living on the street.”

— Valarie, Tennessee



- ▶ **The largest industry in Tennessee is health care and social assistance.**¹² Nationally, more than one-quarter of workers in this industry cannot earn paid sick time.¹³
- ▶ **In Tennessee, 28.5 percent of jobs are considered low-wage jobs.**¹⁴ Low-wage workers are even less likely to have access to paid sick days.

Paid Sick Days Benefit Families, Business and Our Economy

- ▶ **Paid sick days keep families healthy.** When workers have paid sick days, they are able to get regular physicals and take their children to well-child visits and for immunizations, which may prevent serious illnesses.¹⁵ Children with serious illnesses do better when their parents are able to stay with them.¹⁶
- ▶ **Paid sick days are good for business.** Employee turnover is expensive – on average, one-fifth of an employee’s annual salary.¹⁷ Paid sick days result in reduced turnover,¹⁸ which leads to reduced hiring and training costs for businesses.
- ▶ **Paid sick days decrease unnecessary health care costs.** Universal access to paid sick days would eliminate an estimated 1.3 million emergency room visits each year, saving \$1.1 billion annually in costs to individuals, private insurers and public programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁹

Standards for Tennessee and the Nation Should Be Priorities

STATE PROGRESS

- ▶ **Currently, workers in Tennessee are not guaranteed the right to earn paid sick days by state or municipal law.** However, future efforts could lead Tennessee to join the growing list of states and localities with paid sick days laws. A list of current state and local paid sick days laws is available at NationalPartnership.org/PSDLaws. And a growing body of evidence shows that these laws are working well.²⁰

FEDERAL SUPPORT AND LEGISLATION

- ▶ **At the national level, there is strong public support for universal access to paid sick days:** 85 percent of voters want employers to provide paid sick time.²¹
- ▶ The federal **Healthy Families Act (H.R. 932/S. 497)** would establish a national paid sick days standard, allowing workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care, provide care to a sick family member, attend school meetings related to a child’s health condition or disability or seek assistance related to domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault. Workers in businesses with fewer than 15 employees would earn up to seven job-protected *unpaid* sick days each year to be used for the same reasons, unless their employers choose to offer paid sick days.

People across the United States should have a fair shot at getting the care they need, caring for a child or assisting a loved one – no matter where they live or work. For more, visit www.PaidSickDays.org.

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