

Virginians Need Paid Sick Days

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According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, an estimated 1,171,183 private sector workers in Virginia, or 41.4 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

Virginia 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 1,245,000 children in Virginia 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.
- ▶ **Virginia is home to more than 1,200,000 African American workers⁷ and more than 465,000 Latino workers**,⁸ groups with disproportionately low access to paid sick days.⁹
- ▶ **Nearly 280,000 people in Virginia work in restaurants**,¹⁰ an industry that requires frequent contact with the public but in which, nationally, 90 percent of workers cannot earn paid sick days.¹¹ 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.¹²
- ▶ **The largest industry in Virginia is retail trade**.¹³ Nationally, more than half of workers in this industry cannot earn paid sick time.¹⁴

"I have a child who is almost two. When he gets sick, I am the one who has to stay home with him. Then after caring for him, I sometimes end up sick myself. I end up going into work when it is I who am sick because I have to use vacation days when I am out, no matter if it is for vacation or for sickness. So in order not to use up all my vacation days for sickness, I go in and spread all my germs to my co-workers. Not good."

— Dana, Cana, Virginia



- ▶ **In Virginia, 25.3 percent of jobs are considered low-wage jobs.**¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ Children with serious illnesses do better when their parents are able to stay with them.¹⁷
- ▶ **Paid sick days are good for business.** Employee turnover is expensive – on average, one-fifth of an employee’s annual salary.¹⁸ Paid sick days result in reduced turnover,¹⁹ 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.²⁰

Standards for Virginia and the Nation Should Be Priorities

STATE PROGRESS

- ▶ **Currently, workers in Virginia are not guaranteed the right to earn paid sick days by state or municipal law.** However, future efforts could lead Virginia 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.²¹

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.²²
- ▶ 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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