



## Why Do Workers Need Paid Sick Days?

**Almost 1 out of 2 working Americans risk losing their wages and jobs if they fall sick and can't work. Workers need paid sick days to get healthy, care for their sick relatives, reduce contagion and to protect their job.**

**Nearly 50% of full time employees in the United States have ZERO paid sick days<sup>i</sup>**

- 86 million workers with paid sick days cannot use them to care for a sick child.
- 78% of low wage workers do not have paid sick days.
- Women, who are usually the caregivers, comprise 60% of low income workers without paid sick days.

**Having no paid sick days hurts working families**

- Children often go to school or daycare sick because their parents cannot miss work or forfeit wages.
- As baby boomers head toward retirement more families will need to choose between caring for elderly parents and losing their job.
- Workers show up to work sick for fear of losing pay, losing their job and going on public assistance.
- When workers show up to work sick they are less productive and spread illnesses, which means that other families are at risk of increased contagion. <sup>ii</sup>

**The lack of paid sick days is a public health concern for everyone<sup>iii</sup>**

- Workers who disproportionately lack paid sick days work with the public every day.
- Only 14 percent of food and public accommodation workers have any paid sick leave.
- Workers in child care centers, retail clerks, and nursing homes also lack paid sick days.

**Employers benefit when workers have time to recover and care for their family when ill<sup>iv</sup>**

- If employers provide paid sick days, they would benefit from reduced turnover, higher productivity, and reducing the spread of contagion in the workplace.
  - If workers were provided just 7 paid sick days per year, our national economy would experience a net savings of \$8.2 billion per year.
  - Presenteeism costs our national economy \$180 billion annually in lost productivity. For employers, this costs an average of \$255 per employee per year and exceeds the cost of absenteeism and medical and disability benefits.
  - Paid sick days would provide significant savings in reduced turnover. The costs of losing an employee (advertising for, interviewing and training a replacement) can be far greater than the cost of providing short-term leave to retain existing employees.

**When workers have paid sick days, everyone gains. Workers will have time to recover, children and family members will receive the care they need, employers will experience savings in reduced turnover, consumers will be less likely to catch an illness from public spaces, and all will benefit from an overall improvement in well-being.**

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<sup>i</sup> Vicky Lovell, *No Time to be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers when Workers Don't Have Paid Sick Leave*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, May 2004.

<sup>ii</sup> Jodie Levin-Epstein, *Presenteeism and Paid Sick Days*, Center for Law and Social Policy, February 28, 2005

<sup>iii</sup> Lovell, *No Time to be Sick*.

<sup>iv</sup> National Partnership for Women and Families, *Why Paid Sick Days Make Good Business Sense*, 2005.