

# Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence Need **Paid Safe Days**

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Incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking are tragically common, yet our nation's workplace policies do not reflect this reality. Nearly 20 million people experience domestic violence, sexual violence or stalking by intimate partners every year in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Each year, nearly 1,300 women die from intimate partner violence and nearly two million are injured.<sup>2</sup> Women of color and the LGBTQ community are disproportionately affected. **A national paid sick and safe days standard would help provide victims and survivors the support and job stability they need to escape and address violence.**

## Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Are Prevalent and Especially Punishing for Some Groups

**Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking are common and span race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status and more, but some communities are more severely affected than others.**

- ▶ Nearly one in three women will experience physical violence and nearly half will experience psychological violence by an intimate partner in their lifetimes.<sup>3</sup> Even starker, the majority or near majority of Native women, multi-racial women and Black women will experience physical or psychological violence at some point in their lives.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Sexual assault and violence disproportionately affect the LGBTQ community. Half of bisexual women and men will experience sexual assault or violence in their lifetimes, and nearly two out of three transgender people will experience sexual assault.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Low-wage workers often do not have time or money to access medical care, contact the appropriate authorities or obtain a protective order when they experience violence.<sup>6</sup> Fewer than one in three private sector workers who are paid under \$10 an hour have access to paid sick days, and less than half have access to paid vacation days.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Children who have experienced sexual assault or violence need additional assistance from their parents to get medical care, attend court appointments and navigate the justice system. This support is critical because experiencing violence in adolescence can have serious long-term negative effects on future careers and economic security.<sup>8</sup>

## Survivors Need Financial Stability to Address Violence and Stalking and to Seek Help

## **The financial pressures and reverberations associated with domestic and sexual violence or stalking can affect survivors' ability to escape abuse and seek assistance.**

- ▶ Job loss can be particularly devastating for domestic violence survivors because they often need financial security to ensure their safety and the safety of children. Survivors often stay with their abusers due to economic dependence, sometimes as a result of the economic abuse their spouses or partners inflict by withholding and stealing wages, ruining credit scores and even bankrupting their victims.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ Survivors seeking safety or medical treatment often incur increased financial expenses. Nearly three in 10 stalking victims incur out-of-pocket costs from attorney fees, replacing or repairing damage to property, child care, and moving or changing phone numbers.<sup>10</sup> And according to one study, health care costs for women experiencing physical abuse are 42 percent higher than for women not experiencing abuse.<sup>11</sup>

## **Job Security is Critical for Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking**

### **The effects of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking often extend to a survivor's work life, and without supportive policies, can make leaving an abusive situation and seeking assistance even more difficult.**

- ▶ On average, a domestic violence survivor experiences 7.2 days of work-related lost productivity.<sup>12</sup> Low-income women who experience intimate partner violence work, on average, three months fewer than women who do not experience intimate partner violence, which can negatively affect long-term job stability and economic well-being.<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ In one survey, 96 percent of domestic violence survivors reported that domestic abuse affected their ability to perform their job duties.<sup>14</sup> Fifty-six percent reported being late to work because of interference from their batterers.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ Survivors of domestic violence are at an increased risk of harm during and shortly after separating from an abusive partner.<sup>16</sup> It is essential that they are able to find shelter, file restraining orders, attend court dates or receive counseling to prevent further abuse and to be able to continue working.
- ▶ Nearly 10 percent of stalking victims are forced to change or quit their jobs, or leave school to keep themselves safe and stop the behavior.<sup>17</sup>

## **A National Paid Safe Days Standard Would Provide Some of the Support Survivors Need**

Paid sick and safe days help survivors of violence access critical services without risking their financial security. Nationwide, eight states and dozens of cities and counties have passed laws that provide domestic violence survivors with paid or unpaid safe time specifically to address legal, medical and psychological issues that result from abuse, but access to this important protection shouldn't depend on geography.<sup>18</sup>

### **A national paid sick and safe days law – such as the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 1516/S. 636) –**

## would ensure all survivors have a legal right to time away from work to seek assistance.

The bill would allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven paid sick and safe days a year to care for their own health or that of their family members; workers in smaller businesses would earn up to seven job-protected *unpaid* sick and safe days. Safe time could be used to allow survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking to earn time to recover from or seek assistance related to the violence and to allow family members of survivors to support their loved ones in seeking care or services.

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