

# Family Caregivers Need **Paid Sick Days**

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Millions of working people provide care, including end of life care, for family members who are older adults, have disabilities or are chronically ill. Many of these family caregivers are struggling to manage both their caregiving responsibilities and the jobs they need – and research shows that only about half of all family caregivers who have paying jobs can earn paid sick days to care for their own health needs or those of their loved ones.<sup>1</sup> **A national paid sick days standard would help keep family caregivers from having to make impossible choices between their families' financial security and their health.**

## Family Caregivers Face Significant and Growing Challenges

Family caregivers play an important role in keeping older adults out of nursing homes, helping stave off the high cost of long-term services.<sup>2</sup> Yet family caregivers face tremendous challenges in meeting the dual responsibilities of caring for their loved ones while financially supporting their families because the nation lacks basic workplace supports. The impact of these challenges on families, caregivers and the nation's future is substantial.

- ▶ **Millions of Americans serve as unpaid caregivers in addition to working a paying job.** Approximately 43.5 million Americans provide care to family members and six in 10 report working at jobs unrelated to their care responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> More than half of these caregivers work full time and another 16 percent work more than 30 hours per week.<sup>4</sup> These family caregivers often need short periods of time away from work to accompany their loved ones to doctors' appointments, administer medication, or deal with a medical emergency. And yet the workers who are most likely to be family caregivers – those who are paid low wages,<sup>5</sup> Latinos and African Americans,<sup>6</sup> and especially women of color<sup>7</sup> – are among the least likely to have access to paid sick days.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ **As our population ages and people live longer, the need for family caregivers will increase.** The population of adults aged 65 and older will nearly double within the next few decades. By 2050, there will be about 88 million older adults – accounting for more than 20 percent of the U.S. population.<sup>9</sup> And older adults are more likely to have chronic conditions that require regular care. Currently, 80 percent of adults aged 65 and older are living with at least one chronic condition, and 50 percent have at least two.<sup>10</sup> As the size of the older adult population grows and their care needs increase, the need for family caregivers will continue to rise.
- ▶ **There will be fewer family caregivers to care for a growing aging population, resulting in greater caregiving responsibilities for these caregivers.** As the baby boomer generation ages and transitions from being caregivers to also needing care, the demand for care increases and the size of families decreases, there will be fewer potential family

caregivers. The ratio of potential family caregivers aged 45 to 65 for every person aged 80 and older will plummet from 7.2 in 2010 to 2.9 by 2050 in the United States.<sup>11</sup> As a result, family caregivers will likely have increased caregiving responsibilities and face greater conflicts between job and family without basic protections like paid sick days.

- ▶ **Caregivers need care too.** Caregiving can take a physical and emotional toll. Caregivers tend to report higher levels of stress and depression than those who do not provide care,<sup>12</sup> and workers who care for their parents are more likely to report that they have fair or poor health compared to adult children without parental care responsibilities.<sup>13</sup> Access to paid sick days is associated with better use of preventive health services and quicker recovery times,<sup>14</sup> yet only half of employed caregivers say they have paid sick days.<sup>15</sup> Among part-time workers, access is even less common.<sup>16</sup> Particularly for those who do the hard work of providing care, paid sick days are essential to preserving their own health and their ability to continue caring for a loved one.

## A Paid Sick Days Standard Would Provide Critical Support

Currently, no federal law guarantees paid sick days. Thirty-nine jurisdictions guarantee – or will soon guarantee – workers access to paid sick time, but nearly one in three private sector workers still do not have access to this basic protection.<sup>17</sup> A national standard is critical to meeting the health and financial needs of people across the country.

**The Healthy Families Act would set an important national paid sick time standard** that would allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven paid sick days a year to recover from personal illness and care for an ill family member. 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. Learn more at [PaidSickDays.org](http://PaidSickDays.org).

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1 National Alliance for Caregiving. (2015, June). *Caregiving in the U.S.* National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute Publication. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from [http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015\\_CaregivingintheUS\\_Final-Report-June-4\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015_CaregivingintheUS_Final-Report-June-4_WEB.pdf)

2 Chen, L. (2014, October 21). The Growing Costs and Burden of Family Caregiving of Older Adults: A Review of Paid Sick Leave and Family Leave Policies. *The Gerontologist*, 00(00), 1-6.

3 See note 1.

4 Ibid.

5 Cynkar, P., & Mendes, E. (2011, July 26). More Than One in Six American Workers Also Act as Caregivers. *Gallup*. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/148640/one-six-american-workers-act-caregivers.aspx>; See also Williams, J., & Boushey, H. (2010, January). *The Three Faces of Work-Family Conflict: The Poor, the Professionals, and the Missing Middle*. Center for American Progress and Center for WorkLife Law Publication. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/01/pdf/threefaces.pdf>

6 See note 1.

7 Frye, J. (2016, October 3). *The Missing Conversation About Work and Family*. Center for American Progress Publication. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2016/10/03/145208/the-missing-conversation-about-work-and-family/>

8 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017, July 21). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2017* (Table 6). Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>; See also Xia, J., Hayes, J., Gault, B., & Nguyen, H. (2016, February 17). *Paid Sick Days Access and Usage Rates Vary by Race/Ethnicity, Occupation, and Earnings* (Figure 1). Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <https://iwpr.org/publications/paid-sick-days-access-and-usage-rates-vary-by-raceethnicity-occupation-and-earnings/>

9 Colby, S.L., & Ortman, J.M. (2015, March). *Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060*. U.S. Census Bureau Publication. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf>

10 National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2011). *Healthy Aging: Helping People to Live Long and Productive Lives and Enjoy a Good Quality of Life*. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/6114>

11 Redfoot, D., Feinberg, L., & Houser, A. (2013, August). *The Aging of the Baby Boom and the Growing Care Gap: A Look at Future Declines in the Availability of Family Caregivers*. AARP Public Policy Institute. Retrieved 4 September 2017, from [http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public\\_policy\\_institute/ltc/2013/baby-boom-and-the-growing-care-gap-in-brief-AARP-ppi-ltc.pdf](http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/ltc/2013/baby-boom-and-the-growing-care-gap-in-brief-AARP-ppi-ltc.pdf)

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15 See note 1.

16 Ibid.

17 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017, July 21). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2017* (Table 32). Retrieved 4 September 2017, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>

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The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at [NationalPartnership.org](http://NationalPartnership.org).

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