

Women of Color Need a **Paid Sick Days Standard**

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Millions of workers in the United States are forced to jeopardize their wages and their jobs when they become sick or need to care for a sick child or loved one because they cannot earn a single paid sick day. For women – and particularly for women of color – the inability to earn paid sick days can have devastating consequences. It is past time for a national standard that would keep workers from having to make impossible choices between their families' financial security and their health.

Women are the Backbone of Our Families and Communities

In every corner of the United States, women care for their families and also bring home a significant share of their families' income.

- ▶ **When illness strikes or family needs arise, women who cannot earn paid sick time face impossible choices between health and economic stability.** Nearly half of Latina workers (49 percent) and four in 10 African American women who work (40 percent) are not able to earn paid sick days to recover from illness, and many more cannot earn sick time to care for an ill child or loved one.¹

Women of Color Cannot Afford to Lose Pay or Their Jobs

- ▶ **In many families, women of color are the primary source of financial support.** More than four million African American families with children have a female head of household² – most often a mother, grandmother or other relative who is her family's only source of support. The same is true for nearly three million Latino families.³
- ▶ **Women of color are paid less on average than other workers.** On average, African American women make \$286 less per week than white men. Latinas make \$349 less.⁴ Lower wages make it even tougher for women of color to take time off for illness or family care while still making ends meet.
- ▶ **Unpaid days off have real consequences.** For the typical family without paid sick days, just 3.5 days without pay is equivalent to losing an entire month's worth of groceries.⁵ For women of color, who are paid less on average, the situation is even more precarious.
- ▶ **Job loss can be devastating.** Nearly one-quarter of workers report that they have lost a job or were told they would lose a job for taking time off due to personal or family illness.⁶ When job loss does occur, unemployment too often is a long-term proposition that leads to significant financial hardship.

America's Working Families Deserve a Solution

States and localities are leading the way. Four states (Connecticut, California, Massachusetts and Oregon) and 21 localities have – or will soon have – paid sick days laws in place, and a growing body of evidence shows that existing laws are working well.⁷ Many more states and localities have paid sick days legislation or campaigns.⁸ Women of color are often at the center of these efforts, joining advocates for workers, women, children and public health experts to win this important protection.

But ultimately, every worker in the United States should have access to paid sick days, no matter where they live or where they work. A national paid sick days standard would allow millions of workers, including women of color, to earn job-protected paid sick days. An overwhelming majority of voters (85 percent) say employers should provide paid sick time, and strong support exists regardless of political party affiliation.⁹

The Healthy Families Act (H.R. 932/S. 497) would set a national paid sick days standard. For businesses with 15 or more employees, the bill would enable workers to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year to be used to recover from their own short-term illness, access preventative care, provide care for 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 – especially women and people of color – should have a fair shot at getting the care they need, caring for a child or assisting a loved one. Learn more at PaidSickDays.org.

1 O'Connor, R, Hayes, J. & Gault, B. (2014, July). *Paid Sick Days Access Varies by Race/Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, and Job Characteristics* (Table 1). Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved 25 August 2015, from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-access-varies-by-race-ethnicity-sexual-orientation-and-job-characteristics>

2 U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). *American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates 2013, Table S0201: Selected Population Profile in the United States (Black or African American alone)*. Retrieved 27 August 2015, from http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_3YR_S0201&prodType=table (Calculation uses family households headed by females living in a household with family and no husband)

3 U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). *American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates 2013, Table S0201: Selected Population Profile in the United States (Hispanic or Latino (of any race))*. Retrieved 27 August 2015, from http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_3YR_S0201&prodType=table (Calculation uses family households headed by females living in a household with family and no husband)

4 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015, February) *Household Data Annual Averages: Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics* (Table 37). Retrieved 25 August 2015, from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.pdf> (Calculation is based on the 2014 annual average of median weekly earnings of full time wage and salary workers)

5 Gould, E., Filion, K., & Green, A. (2011, June). *The need for paid sick days: The lack of a federal policy further erodes family economic security*. Economic Policy Institute Publication. Retrieved 27 August 2015, from http://www.epi.org/publication/the_need_for_paid_sick_days

6 Smith, T., & Kim, J. (2010, June). *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences* (p. 6). National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Public Welfare Foundation Publication. Retrieved 27 August 2015, from <http://www.publicwelfare.org/resources/DocFiles/psd2010final.pdf>

7 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2015, April). *Paid Sick Days: Low Cost, High Reward for Workers, Employers and Communities*. Retrieved 25 August 2015, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-low-cost-high-reward.pdf>; For information on paid sick day statutes, see <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-statutes.pdf>.

8 For information on current paid sick days legislation and campaigns, see <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/campaigns/psd/state-and-local-action-paid-sick-days.pdf>.

9 National telephone poll conducted with 1,022 adults on landlines and cellphones May 28-31, 2015, by the *New York Times* and *CBS News*. Retrieved 21 September 2015, from http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/03/business/income-inequality-workers-rights-international-trade-poll.html?_r=0

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