November 15, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to support the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 1876/ S. 984), a common sense piece of legislation that would allow workers to earn up to seven paid sick days a year to recover from short term illnesses like the flu, to care for a sick family member, or to seek assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Without paid sick days, workers are forced to make impossible choices when illness strikes: stay home, lose pay and risk their jobs; or go to work sick, risk their health and spread disease to their co-workers and communities. A national paid sick days standard would help working families meet their health and financial needs, while boosting business productivity and improving worker retention.

When working people have no choice but to go to work sick, they risk infecting others. Nearly 40 percent of private sector workers — and eight in 10 of the lowest-income workers — lack access to even a single paid sick day.¹ And 4.2 million don’t have access to paid sick days because they are too new to their jobs to be eligible for the policy their employer provides.² In total, about 44 million workers in the United States cannot take a sick day without losing income or risking their jobs. Millions cannot take a sick day to care for a sick child or close family member.

The lack of paid sick days is acute in jobs requiring frequent contact with the public, with potentially grave public health consequences. More than three in four food service and hotel workers (78 percent) don’t have a single paid sick day.³ Without paid sick days, workers are forced to take unpaid leave or work sick. In the restaurant industry, for example, nearly two-thirds of servers and cooks report that they have served or cooked while ill. This puts workers, customers and businesses in danger.⁴ Similarly, the vast majority of workers in child care centers and nursing homes cannot earn paid sick days.⁵ When these workers have no choice but to work sick, they risk spreading contagious diseases to the very young and the very old — particularly vulnerable populations.

Paid sick days enable working parents to care for their children when they are sick — reducing both community contagion and costs to our health care system. Parents without paid sick days are more than twice as likely as parents with paid sick days to send a sick child to school or day care.⁶ When parents have no choice but to do so, children’s health and educational attainment is put at risk — as is the health of classmates, teachers and child care providers. Parents without paid sick days are also five times more likely to report taking their child or a family member to the emergency room because they were unable to take time off during normal work hours.⁷ Emergency room visits attributed to the failure to let workers’ earn paid sick days are estimated to cost the U.S. more than one billion dollars per year.⁸

Businesses benefit when their employees have access to paid sick days. When sick workers are able to stay home, the spread of disease slows and workplaces are both healthier and more productive. Plus, workers recover faster from illness and obtain timely medical care — enabling them to get back to work more quickly and holding down health care costs. Paid sick days also
reduce the productivity lost when employees work sick — known as “presenteeism” — which is estimated to cost our national economy $160 billion annually, surpassing the cost of absenteeism.9

**Paid sick days policies have been enacted successfully at the state and local levels.** Earlier this year, Connecticut became the first state and Seattle became the third city to adopt a paid sick days law joining the trailblazing cities of San Francisco and Washington, D.C., in allowing workers to earn paid sick time to recover from a short term illness, care for a sick family member, or seek routine medical care. San Francisco’s paid sick days law has been in place since 2007. Since its passage, the number of businesses and jobs in the city has increased relative to the surrounding five counties.10 And workers and their families have benefitted with little to no burden on employers.11 The momentum for paid sick days policies is growing in states and cities across the country, but illness knows no geographic boundaries and access to paid sick days should not be dependent on where a worker is employed. That is why the national paid sick days standard proposed in the Healthy Families Act is so important.

**The Healthy Families Act would:**
- Allow 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 illness, access preventive care or provide care for a sick family member;
- Allow workers who are victims of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault to use their paid sick days for recovery or to seek assistance; and
- Allow employers that already provide paid sick days or paid time off to maintain their existing policies, as long as they meet the minimums set forth in the bill for amount of time, types of use and method of use.

The Healthy Families Act would let more than 30 million more workers earn paid sick days, expanding access to 90 percent of the private sector workforce.12 The most vulnerable workers who currently lack paid sick time would gain access, including:
- 15 million low-wage workers;
- 13 million women workers;
- 4 million African American workers;
- 6 million food service workers; and
- 6 million Latino workers.13

Working people should not have to risk their financial health when they do what the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urge, and we all agree is the right thing to do when illness strikes — stay home to recover. Setting a minimum paid sick days standard will be good for America’s workers, families, communities and businesses.

We urge you to demonstrate your strong commitment to our nation’s working families by becoming a co-sponsor of the Healthy Families Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,

*National Organizations*
National Partnership for Women & Families
9to5, National Association of Working Women
A Better Balance: The Work and Family Legal Center
AFL-CIO
African American Ministers in Action
American Association of University Women
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Government Employees
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
American Public Health Association
American Rights at Work
Asian American Ministers in Action
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<td>Voices for America's Children</td>
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### State and Local Organizations

#### Alabama
AAUW of Alabama
National Organization for Women – Alabama

#### Alaska
AAUW of Alaska

#### Arizona
AAUW of Arizona
National Organization for Women – Arizona

#### Arkansas
AAUW of Arkansas
AFSCME 994
Arkansas Community Organizations
Arkansas Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice
Teamsters Local #878

#### California
9to5 Bay Area
9to5 Los Angeles
AAUW of California
California Breastfeeding Coalition
Contra Costa National Organization for Women
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center
National Council of Jewish Women, California State Public Affairs

#### Colorado
9to5 Colorado
AAUW of Colorado

#### Connecticut
AAUW of Connecticut
Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition

#### Delaware
AAUW of Delaware

#### District of Columbia
The Restaurant Opportunities Center of Washington, DC

#### Florida
AAUW of Florida
Florida Federation of Business & Professional Women (BPW/FL)
National Organization for Women - North Miami
National Organization for Women - Sarasota/Manatee
Organize Now

#### Georgia
9to5 Atlanta Working Women
AAUW of Georgia
Georgia Job Family Collaborative
Parent to Parent of Georgia

**Hawaii**
AAUW of Hawaii

**Idaho**
AAUW of Idaho

**Illinois**
AAUW of Illinois
Action Now
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
FCCTP - Local 1708
Federation of College Clerical and Technical Personnel, Local 1708, AFT, IFT, AFL-CIO
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Illinois National Organization for Women
National Council of Jewish Women, Illinois State Public Affairs Committee
National Organization for Women - North/Northwest Suburban Illinois NELA
National Organization for Women - West Suburban Chicago
ParentsWork
Project IRENE
Women Employed

**Indiana**
AAUW of Indiana
Indiana Black Breastfeeding Coalition

**Iowa**
Iowa Caregivers Association

**Kansas**
AAUW of Kansas

**Kentucky**
AAUW of Kentucky
National Council of Jewish Women, Kentucky State Public Affairs

**Louisiana**
AAUW of Louisiana
Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition
National Council of Jewish Women, Louisiana State Public Affairs

**Maine**
AAUW of Maine
Food AND Medicine
Maine Centers for Women, Work, and Community
Maine Women's Lobby
National Association of Social Workers, Maine Chapter
Southern Maine Workers' Center

**Maryland**
AAUW of Maryland
Disciples Justice Action Network
Love 'N Care, LLC
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition

**Massachusetts**
AAUW of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition

**Michigan**
AAUW of Michigan
National Council of Jewish Women, Michigan State Public Affairs
National Organization for Women - Wayne County Chapter
Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice

**Minnesota**
AAUW of Minnesota
National Council of Jewish Women, Minnesota State Public Affairs
TakeAction Minnesota

**Mississippi**
AAUW of Mississippi

**Missouri**
AAUW of Missouri
National Council of Jewish Women, Missouri State Public Affairs
Montana
AAUW of Montana

Nebraska
AAUW of Nebraska

Nevada
AAUW of Nevada

New Hampshire
AAUW of New Hampshire

New Jersey
AAUW of New Jersey
National Organization for Women - Middlesex County
National Council of Jewish Women, New Jersey State Public Affairs

New Mexico
AAUW of New Mexico
New Mexico Women’s Agenda

New York
AAUW of New York
Health Care Access Coalition
Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State
New York State Paid Family Leave Coalition
New York Union Child Care Coalition

North Carolina
AAUW of North Carolina
National Organization of Women - Asheville
North Carolina Justice Center

North Dakota
AAUW of North Dakota

Ohio
AAUW of Ohio
Central Ohio Breastfeeding Coalition

Oklahoma
AAUW of Oklahoma

Oregon
AAUW of Oregon
Children First for Oregon
Family Forward Oregon

Pennsylvania
AAUW of Pennsylvania
Bebashi
Childspace West Child Care Center
First Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Organization for Women
Institute for the Advancement of Working Families
National Council of Jewish Women, Pennsylvania State Public Affairs
National Organization for Women - Ni-Ta-Nee
PASNAP
PathWays PA
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Philadelphia Coalition of Labor Union Women
Philadelphia Jobs with Justice
Philadelphia NOW
Women's Law Project
WOMEN'S WAY

Rhode Island
AAUW of Rhode Island
National Council of Jewish Women, Rhode Island State Public Affairs
Rhode Island Breastfeeding Coalition

South Carolina
AAUW of South Carolina
South Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

South Dakota
AAUW of South Dakota

Tennessee
AAUW of Tennessee
Interfaith Worker Justice of East Tennessee
Texas
AAUW of Texas
National Council of Jewish Women, Texas
State Public Affairs
Texas Breastfeeding Coalition

Utah
AAUW of Utah
National Council of Jewish Women, Utah
State Public Affairs

Vermont
AAUW of Vermont
Vermont Peace & Justice Center
Voices for Vermont's Children

Virginia
AAUW of Virginia
Chesapeake WIC
National Organization for Women - Virginia
Virginia Breastfeeding Task Force

Washington
AAUW of Washington
Children's Alliance
Communications Workers of America, Retiree Chapter of Local 7800
Economic Opportunity Institute
King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Wisconsin
9to5 Milwaukee
AAUW of Wisconsin
Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Women's Hospital
Glow Dance and Fitness
SEIU HealthCare Wisconsin
SEIU Wisconsin State Council
South Central Federation of Labor
The Workers' Rights Center
Voces de la Frontera

Wyoming
AAUW of Wyoming
OneAmerica
Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans
Seattle Coalition for a Healthy Workforce
National Organization for Women - Seattle
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Washington Family Leave Coalition
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Washington State National Organization for Women


