

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 Justice Center, Asian American Center for Advancing Justice
Business and Professional Women's Foundation
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Center for Community Change
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Coalition on Human Needs
Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)
Communications Workers of America
Demos: Ideas & Action
Direct Care Alliance
Families USA
Family Caregiver Alliance
Family Equality Council
Family Values @ Work Consortium
Feminist Majority
Friends Committee on National Legislation
First Focus Campaign for Children
Half in Ten
Human Impact Partners
Human Rights Campaign
Interfaith Worker Justice
Jewish Women International
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
Labor Project for Working Families
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Legal Momentum
Legal Voices
Main Street Alliance
Maternity Care Coalition
Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Washington Office
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
NAACP
National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW)
National Association of Mothers' Centers
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Social Workers
National Center on Caregiving, Family Caregiving Alliance
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Council of Negro Women
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Fatherhood Initiative
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Research Center for Women & Families / Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
OWL – The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Progressive States Network
RESULTS

Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
Service Employees International Union
(SEIU)
The Partnership for Working Families
Trust for America's Health
U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce
United Auto Workers (UAW)
United Food and Commercial Workers
International Union

United Steelworkers (USW)
USAction
Voices for America's Children
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women's Research & Education
Institute
Young Invincibles

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

Colorado Coalition for Girls
Colorado Progressive Coalition
FRESC: Good Jobs, Strong Communities
Gate City Moving
Interfaith Worker Justice Committee of
Colorado
National Council of Jewish Women,
Colorado State Public Affairs
One 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

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

West Virginia

AAUW of West Virginia
West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance

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

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010, March). *Employee Benefits in the United States: Selected paid leave benefits: Access, National Compensation Survey (Table 6)*. Retrieved 9 December 2010, from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>

² Williams, C., et al. (2011, January). *44 Million U.S. Workers Lacked Paid Sick Days in 2010: 77 Percent of Food Service Workers Lacked Access*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved 2 June 2011, from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/44-million-u.s.-workers-lacked-paid-sick-days-in-2010-77-percent-of-food-service-workers-lacked-access>

³ Joint Economic Committee, United States Congress. (2010, March). *Expanding Access to Paid Sick Leave: The Impact of the Healthy Families Act on America's Workers*. Retrieved 2 December 2010, from http://jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=abf8aca7-6b94-4152-b720-2d8d04b81ed6

⁴ Restaurant Opportunities Centers United. (2010, September 30). *Serving While Sick: High Risks and Low Benefits for the Nation's Restaurant Workforce, and Their Impact on the Consumer*. Restaurant Opportunities Centers United Publication. Retrieved 9 December 2010, from [http://www.rocunited.org/files/roc_servingwhilesick_v06%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.rocunited.org/files/roc_servingwhilesick_v06%20(1).pdf)

⁵ Hartmann, H. (2007, February 13). *The Healthy Families Act: Impact on Workers, Business, The Economy and Public Health*. Testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2007. Retrieved 7 January 2011, from http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/Hartmann_HFA_testimony021307.pdf

⁶ Smith, T., & Kim, J. (2010, June). *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*. National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Public Welfare Foundation Publication. Retrieved 2 December 2010, from <http://www.publicwelfare.org/resources/DocFiles/psd2010final.pdf>

⁷ Smith, T., & Kim, J. (2010, June). *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*. National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Public Welfare Foundation Publication. Retrieved 2 December 2010, from <http://www.publicwelfare.org/resources/DocFiles/psd2010final.pdf>

⁸ Miller, K, Williams, C. & Yi, Y. (2011, November). *Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits*. Institute for Women's Policy Research publication. Retrieved 15 November 2011, from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-and-health-cost-savings-from-reduced-emergency-department-visits/>

⁹ Stewart, W. et al. (2003, December). Lost Productive Health Time Costs from Health Conditions in the United States: Results from the American Productivity Audit. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 45. Retrieved 22 April 2011, from <http://www.wellsteps.com/admin/attachments/16d22c5c8a7c1a967f9dc4c24edc0f44.pdf>

¹⁰ Petro, J. (2010, March). *Paid Sick Leave Does Not Harm Business Growth or Job Growth*. Drum Major Institute for Public Policy. Retrieved 10 August, 2011, from http://www.drummajorinstitute.org/pdfs/Paid_Sick_Leave_Does_Not_Harm.pdf

¹¹ Drago, R. & Lovell, V. (2011, February). *San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcomes for Employers and Employees*. Institute for Women's Policy Research publication. Retrieved 23 June 2011, from <http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/family-leave-paid-sick-days/#publications>

¹² Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress. (2010, March). *Expanding Access to Paid Sick Leave: The Impact of the Healthy Families Act on America's Workers*. Available at http://jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=abf8aca7-6b94-4152-b720-2d8d04b81ed6

¹³ Joint Economic Committee, United States Congress. (2010, March). *Expanding Access to Paid Sick Leave: The Impact of the Healthy Families Act on America's Workers*. Retrieved 2 December 2010, from http://jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=abf8aca7-6b94-4152-b720-2d8d04b81ed6