**Back-to-School Toolkit**

Suggested Talking Points and Questions for PTA Meetings and Other Parent/School Gatherings

**Sample talking points to provide some context for the discussion:**

*If in a state with a campaign…*

* [XX percent] of working people in [city/state name] cannot earn a single paid sick day. That means parents often have no choice but to send a sick child to school because they risk losing pay and their jobs if they stay home.
* When parents are able to earn paid sick days, they can keep their sick children home from school and make sure their children get the care they need.
* When parents are able to earn paid sick days, their children are much more likely to receive preventative care, including well-child visits, flu shots and other vaccinations.
* Here in [city/state name], there is a campaign underway for a paid sick days law – a law that would guarantee employed people the right to earn paid sick time.
* In Congress, there’s also a proposal pending that would guarantee workers the right to earn paid sick days. That proposal is called the Healthy Families Act, and a fact sheet on it is available here: **NationalPartnership.org/HFAFactSheet**

*OR if in a state without a campaign…*

* Here in [city/state name], we need to start talking to other parents, teachers and elected officials about the need for a paid sick days law – a law that would guarantee employed people the right to earn paid sick time.
* 33 jurisdictions across the country have, or will soon have, paid sick days laws in place, including: Connecticut, California, Massachusetts, Oregon, Vermont, Arizona, Washington, Rhode Island, Maryland and New Jersey; cities and counties like San Francisco, Oakland, Emeryville, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, San Diego and Berkeley, Calif.; Washington, D.C.; Seattle and Tacoma, Wash.; New York City and Westchester County, N.Y.; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Pa.; Montgomery County, Md.; Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth, Minn.; Chicago and Cook County, Ill.; Austin, Dallas and San Antonio, Texas. There are also other active campaigns in many cities and states across the country.
* School nurses, educators, children’s groups and others have been very active on this issue because they know firsthand that the whole school suffers when parents can’t afford to keep a sick child at home.

**Suggested discussion questions and resources:**

1. What have you noticed about how illnesses spread through schools?
2. When kids come to school sick, what impact has that had on your child or your child’s classroom? What about on school officials, including teachers and school nurses?
3. Would you support a law that provides workers in [city/state name] the ability to earn paid sick days? Why or why not? What about a national law? [*If any of the following arguments are raised, refer to the following points*]:

* **Don’t see it as a big problem:** Recite the fact that at least 32 million workers in the U.S. can’t earn a single paid sick day. Explain that there are big disparities by income and race. A lack of paid sick days affects everyone, and when employers offer paid sick time it improves the economic security of working families, benefits public health and reduces health care costs for everyone.
* **Concerns about employee misuse:** Data from San Francisco – which passed the nation’s first paid sick days law in 2006 – show that workers take far fewer days than they ultimately earn. And even the chief restaurant lobby in San Francisco says that abuse has not been a problem.
* **Concerns about business costs:** Businesses actually lose money when employees come to work sick and are not as productive, and potentially spread illnesses to other employees and consumers. In fact, businesses typically lose $160 billion dollars annually due to presenteeism (working while sick).
* **Concerns about job loss/business failure:** There is no evidence that a paid sick days law would cost jobs or cause businesses to struggle. In fact, research has shown just the opposite. The number of jobs and businesses in San Francisco exceeded average growth relative to the five counties that neighbor San Francisco in the years since the city’s paid sick days law passed in 2006. In Connecticut, job growth across industries, including leisure and hospitality, has increased since the state passed a paid sick days law in 2011. There is additional evidence from many cities, including Washington, D.C., Seattle and Jersey City, that paid sick days have not led to job loss, slower business growth or cost-shifting onto consumers or workers.
* *For more information on the need for and benefits of paid sick days, see the resources available at* [http://www.paidsickdays.org](http://www.nationalpartnership.org/issues/work-family/paid-sick-days.html)

1. What messages do you think would be effective in reaching other people – parents and non-parents – about the need for a paid sick days law?
2. What would you be willing to do to help spread the word?

*After the discussion, provide information about getting involved. If there is no campaign in your area, provide the sample letter to legislators and encourage them to support the idea and draft a bill.*