

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:

- 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.
- 38 jurisdictions across the country have paid sick days laws in place, including: Connecticut, California, Massachusetts, Oregon, Vermont, Arizona, Washington, Rhode Island, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Colorado, New Mexico, and Washington, D.C.; cities and counties like San Francisco, Oakland, Emeryville, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, San Diego and Berkeley, Calif.; Seattle and Tacoma, Wash.; New York City and Westchester County, N.Y.; Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Allegheny County, Pa.; Montgomery County, Md.; Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, and Bloomington, 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 more than 30 million workers in the U.S. can’t earn a single paid sick day. Consider sharing our fact sheet [Paid Sick Days to Care for a Child at Home](#). 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). Paid sick days also reduce business costs by reducing turnover. In Austin, Texas, for instance, a cost benefit analysis of the citywide paid sick days ordinance showed that on net, city businesses stand to save \$4.5 million annually, largely as a result of reduce employee turnover.

- **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.paid sick days.org>*
4. 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?
 5. 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.