

**Coalition of Labor Union Women
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WORKING FAMILIES NEED PAID SICK DAYS AND PAID FAMILY LEAVE

Every day working women and men in the United States struggle to meet the dual demands of work and family because their workplaces lack basic family friendly policies.

It is long past time for workplaces to reflect the needs of 21st century working families, which for many include the ability to care for children, family members and elderly relatives while also being productive, responsible employees.

Paid Sick Days

Nearly four in ten private-sector workers — and 81% of the lowest-wage workers — do not have paid sick days to care for their own health. That is forty million workers with no access to paid sick days at all and another 4.2 million haven't been on the job long enough to be eligible for paid sick days.¹

The absence of paid sick time has forced Americans to make untenable choices between needed income and jobs on the one hand and caring for their own and their family's health on the other.

Workers face job loss and workplace discipline for taking sick time. Nearly one quarter of workers (23%) say they have lost a job or were told they would lose a job for taking time off to deal with a personal or family illness, including nearly one-sixth (16%) who say they have actually lost a job. Nearly one-sixth (16%) also say they or a family member were fired, suspended, written up or otherwise penalized or were told they would face such penalties for illness related absences.

Providing paid sick time improves public health by reducing infectious disease. Adults without paid sick days are 1.5 times more likely than adults with paid sick days to report going to work with a contagious illness like the flu or a viral infection — and risk infecting others. For example, more than three in four food service and hotel workers (78%) don't have a single paid sick day — and workers in child care centers and nursing homes overwhelmingly lack paid sick days.²

Working women are more likely to have significant caregiving responsibilities, including caring for elderly parents, children, or ill spouses/partners. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of mothers work outside the home, and women's earnings make up a substantial share of family income.³ Seventy-six percent of African-American women, 67 percent of Asian American women, and 61 percent of Latinas with children under 18 are in the labor force.⁴ One in three working women report that they provide care for an elderly relative, for persons with disabilities, or for special needs children.⁵ Four in five mothers are primarily responsible for selecting their children's doctors and accompanying children to appointments.⁶

Women often lose pay or risk losing their jobs to care for a sick child, and low-wage working women are the most likely to suffer financially. Half of working mothers miss work when their child gets sick. Of these mothers, half do not get paid when they take this time off. Among low

income working mothers, two in three report losing pay.⁷ One in eight women (13 percent) and one in five women with children (20 percent) reported that they or a family member had been fired or disciplined by an employer for taking time off to cope with an illness or to care for a sick child or family member.⁸

More than a third (37%) of working women — more than 13 million — in businesses with 15 or more employees are not able to take a paid sick day when they or a family member are ill. Low-wage workers—the majority of whom are women—are even less likely to have paid sick days. Two-thirds of workers making \$10.63 per hour or less don't have access to paid sick time. Women-dominated industries are among the least likely to offer paid sick days. For example, nearly three-quarters of child care workers (72 percent) and food service workers (73 percent) lack access to paid sick time.⁹

Over 66 million American adults are unpaid caregivers for family members or friends and paid sick days would help working family caregivers to manage both their caregiving responsibilities and the jobs they need to support their families.

Currently, no federal law guarantees paid sick days, but three cities and one state (San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Milwaukee and Connecticut) have passed laws guaranteeing paid sick days to workers in their cities.

Paid Family Leave

Only 11 percent of workers in the U.S. have access to paid family leave through their employers, and fewer than 40 percent have access to personal medical leave through short-term disability insurance.

Only half of the workforce has access to job-protected unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).¹⁰ This leaves roughly 75 million workers with no protection under federal law. For those workers who do have access to leave under the FMLA, millions can't afford to take it — forcing them to sacrifice their own health or their family member's needs in order to keep a paycheck and prevent job loss.

Tens of millions of families are living paycheck to paycheck—increasing the financial impact of personal illness, family caregiving, and the arrival of new children. For example, having a baby is the most expensive health event that families face during their childbearing years.¹¹ Thirteen percent of families with a new infant become poor within a month.¹² And nearly half of caregivers say that the current economic climate has made it harder for them to provide care to their family members.¹³ In tough times, paid leave can make a real difference in the health and financial well-being of working families.

States are leading the way with models for successful paid leave policies. California and New Jersey have successfully implemented statewide paid family leave programs to complement their Temporary Disability Insurance (personal medical leave) programs. These programs are paid for by employee contributions and have been used by hundreds of thousands of workers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

The Coalition of Labor Union Women supports the Healthy Families Act (HFA) which would create a national paid sick days standard. HFA 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 illness, access preventive care, provide care for a sick family member or seek assistance for domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault.

CLUW supports proposals that would provide working families with access to paid family and medical leave, including President Obama's proposed FY 2012 budget which includes \$23 million to establish a state paid leave fund within the U.S. Department of Labor. Grants made from this fund would assist states with planning, startup and outreach activities related to paid family and medical leave programs. The state paid leave fund would promote state innovation in establishing paid leave programs that meet the needs of working families.

CLUW will be an active participant in state and local campaigns to pass paid sick days and paid family leave around the nation and in federal efforts to secure family friendly workplaces for all workers.

¹U.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>. Includes tenure adjustment made in: Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2010, December). *Fact Sheet: 44 Million U.S. Workers Lacked Paid Sick Days in 2010*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved 7 January 2011, from <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B293PSD.pdf>

²Hartmann, 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_testimony02I307.pdf

³Heather Boushey and Ann O'Leary, eds. *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything*, 2009.

⁴*Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, 2007. www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook2007.htm.

⁵Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It*, Basic Books, 2000.

⁶Kaiser Family Foundation, *Women and Health Care: A National Profile*, 2005, as cited in Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being," 2007.

⁷Institute for Women's Policy Research. "Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being," 2007. www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254_paidicksdaysFS.pdf.

⁸Lake Research Partners telephone survey of 1,200 likely voters nationwide (2.8% margin of error), conducted June 20 - 27, 2007.

⁹Joint Economic Committee, *Expanding Access to Paid Sick Leave: The Impact of the Healthy Families Act on America's Workers*, March 2010.

¹⁰Waldfoegel, J. (2001, September). Family and Medical Leave: Evidence from the 2000 Surveys. *Monthly Labor Review*, 17-23. Retrieved 14 December 2010, from <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2001/09/art2full.pdf>

¹¹Amnesty International. (2010). *Deadly Delivery: The Maternal Health Care Crisis in the USA*. Amnesty International Publication. Retrieved 13 December 2010, from <http://www.amnestyusa.org/dignity/pdf/DeadlyDelivery.pdf>

¹²Rynell, A. (2008, October). *Causes of Poverty: Findings from Recent Research*. Heartland Alliance Mid-America Institute on Poverty Publication. Retrieved 14 December 2010, from <http://www.heartlandalliance.org/whatwedo/advocacy/reports/causes-of-poverty.pdf>

¹³Volunteers of America. (2010, March/April). *America's Caregiving and Aging Challenges: Top Line Data*, 6. Volunteers of America Publication. Retrieved 14 December 2010, from http://voa.org/topline_data