

## 10 Reasons Why YOU Should Support Paid Sick Days

Did you know that there's no state or federal law that requires employers to provide any number of paid sick days to their employees? A growing coalition of organizations is launching a campaign here in North Carolina to change this startling fact. We're working to get a state law passed that would guarantee workers up to seven paid sick days a year.

If you don't already support providing a basic workplace standard that helps families face the challenging demands of balancing work and family, read on.

**10. Nearly Half.** That is, nearly half of the state's workforce lacks paid sick days. That's 1.6 million North Carolinians that have to make the impossible choice between taking care of themselves or a sick child or losing a day's pay or even a job.

**9. Changing Workforce.** Over the last century, women have left the home and joined the workforce in overwhelming numbers. The majority of families depend on at least two incomes and struggle to meet the competing needs of their jobs and their loved ones. But our labor laws haven't kept pace.

**8. Low-Wage Workers Hit Hardest.** Nationally, over three-fourths of low-wage workers lack paid sick days. And because African-Americans and Hispanics are overrepresented in the low-wage service and retail sectors, they are more impacted by a lack of a paid sick days. We can't continue leaving our hardworking low-wage earners behind.

**7. Women: Over-Burdened Caretakers.** Almost half of our nation's working mothers miss work to care for a sick child. And of these mothers, almost half miss a day's pay to care for their sick child. On top of this, women are less likely than men to receive paid sick days overall. Women deserve and need relief.

**6. Kids Get Sick.** On average, children miss three days of school per year due to health reasons. Children in poorer families are more likely to have longer health-related absences. But many times, there's no one to care for the sick kids because their parents don't have paid sick days. Kids often get sent to school or day care sick, infecting their peers and teachers in the process. And studies show that kids recover faster when their parents care for them. Who's going to take care of our kids?

**5. Increasing Elder Care Responsibilities.** Our aging population is increasing the number of people caring for older relatives. Nationally, thirty-five percent of workers, both women and men, report they have cared for an older relative in the past year. As Baby Boomers age, elder care responsibilities will only continue to rise. Grandma shouldn't have to worry about receiving care from her children because they can't take time off.

**4. Improved Public Health.** Paid sick days help protect workers and the public from the spread of infectious diseases. We know the drill—you can't take time off? You go to work sick and your sniffles get your colleagues sick too. Workers who lack paid sick days interact with the public everyday. Nationally, seventy-eight percent of food service and accommodation workers lack paid sick days. Do you want the flu with your fries?

**3. Good for Businesses.** Employers gain with paid sick days through increased productivity, lower health costs, reduced turnover, and decreased employee absences. A national report found that "presenteeism"—when sick employees come to work—costs employers an average of \$255 per employee per year. Similarly, employees with sick days are less likely to quit when their work and family responsibilities conflict and more likely to return to work after taking sick days.

**2. Voters Want Them.** In a nationwide telephone poll in June 2007, nearly nine in ten likely voters supporting guaranteeing all workers a minimum number of paid sick days to care for themselves and/or immediate family members. Support crossed party lines and geographical regions and was strong in virtually every demographic. Campaigns just like ours are now active in fourteen other states and there's a bill to provide paid sick days in Congress, "The Healthy Families Act". Momentum is building. We are speaking up.

**1. Family Values.** It's simple: we say we're a nation of family values but we're not doing a good job of valuing families. It's time to back our words with action.

Source: NC Justice Center, Louisa Warren