

# **Healthy Families Act of 2023**

## **Senate HELP Chairman Bernie Sanders and Representative Rosa DeLauro**

**The United States is one of only two major countries that does not provide any paid time off for workers with short-term illnesses.** Lacking access to sick leave, workers are forced to make untenable choices between getting a paycheck and keeping their jobs on the one hand and caring for their own and their family's health on the other.

**Currently 34 million American workers in the U.S. lack paid sick time entirely**, including [25 percent](#) of the private sector workforce and nine percent of the public sector workforce. [Paid sick leave is particularly inaccessible among low wage workers.](#) Less than a third of private sector workers in the bottom ten percent of income have access to paid sick leave.

Fourteen states and Washington DC have implemented state-level paid leave protections. Many cities and counties have also passed local sick time laws as well. **Workers are much more likely to go to work sick when they do not have access to paid sick leave.** Implementation of paid sick leave laws in [Washington](#) and [New Jersey](#) significantly reduced the number of workers reporting to work while sick.

**It's time for the United States to ensure sick leave is available for workers across the country.**

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 illnesses, access preventive care, provide care to a sick family member, or attend school meetings related to a child's health condition or disability.
  - Workers in businesses with fewer than 15 employees would earn up to seven job-protected *unpaid* sick days each year to be used for the same reasons, unless their employers choose to offer paid sick days.
- Allow workers who are victims of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault to use their paid sick days to recover or seek assistance related to an incident.
- Include a simple method for calculating accrued sick time. Workers would earn a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours per year, unless the employer selects a higher limit.
- Allow employers to require certification if an employee uses more than three paid sick days in a row. For victims of domestic violence, the certification may be from a law enforcement officer, victim advocate or court order.
- Allow employers to use their existing policies, as long as they meet the minimums set forth for time, types of use and method of use, and give employers flexibility as to how they define a "year" for the purposes of sick time accrual.

## Why We Need This Bill:

**Workers** with access to paid sick leave under state-level mandates are [significantly more likely to use sick days](#) than workers that are not guaranteed paid sick leave.

- **Workers without paid sick leave are [three times](#) more likely to delay or forgo necessary health care** for themselves.
- Workers without paid sick leave are [nearly twice as likely](#) to forgo medical care for their family compared to working adults with paid sick days.
- Working while sick also increases a worker's probability of suffering an injury on the job. Workers with access to paid sick leave are [28 percent](#) less likely than workers without paid sick leave to suffer nonfatal occupational injuries.

**Parents** without paid sick time are [twice](#) as likely to send a sick child to school or child care because they have to go to work.

- When children go to school while sick, they risk their own health and that of other children, teachers, and administrators. Schools can play a key role in transmitting contagious illnesses like influenza and COVID-19.
- Paid sick leave access has been shown to reduce the spread of COVID-19. In 2020, states that enacted emergency sick leave provisions from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act [experienced fewer COVID cases](#) compared to states that did not.
- Paid sick leave laws passed by cities [prevent](#) about 100 influenza infections per week for every 100,000 people.

**Employers** who provide paid sick leave benefits to workers reduces employee turnover by [25 percent](#).

- Paid sick days contribute to more cost-effective use of health care resources. [A 2011 study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research](#) found that a universal paid sick days policy would reduce preventable visits to the emergency room and result in cost savings of \$1.1B per year, including \$500M in savings for public health insurance programs like Medicare and Medicaid.
- Lost productivity due to illness costs American businesses more than [\\$300 billion](#) annually, and that 71 percent of that cost stems from workers coming to work while ill.

**Individuals who experience abuse** risk losing their jobs or critical income when they need to take time away from work to address domestic-violence-related issues, such as obtaining a restraining order or finding housing in order to avoid or prevent physical or sexual abuse. Guaranteed Paid Sick Leave would allow for these individuals to access critical care without loss of income.

- [According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), more than 1 in 3 women and more than 1 in 4 men in the United States report having experienced rape, physical abuse, or some form of unwanted sexual contact at some point in their lives.
  - Women and men of color are even more likely to report being impacted by intimate partner violence.
- Nearly [73 percent](#) of domestic violence survivors report that financial problems forced them to remain with their abusers longer than they wanted or to return to their abusers after having left, and more than half (53 percent) report that they **lost a job because of the abuse**.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that intimate partner violence [costs over \\$700,000,000](#) annually due to the victims' lost productivity in employment.