Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools: The Case for a National Paid Sick Days Standard

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We all want what’s best for our kids. Both parents and educators know firsthand the importance of keeping children healthy, and access to paid sick days for parents can make a real difference. But 44 million workers in the United States are not able to earn paid sick time to recover from illness — and millions more have no paid sick time to care for a sick child.

**Kids and schools are healthier when parents have paid sick days.**

- As any parent or teacher knows, kids in school or day care frequently get sick. When they do, a parent’s care helps them recover more quickly.

- But more than half of U.S. working parents (52 percent) don’t have even a few paid sick days that they can use to care for a sick child. These parents must make impossible choices between their child’s care and their paycheck when illness strikes. Many risk their jobs if they stay home to care for a sick child.

- That’s why, nationwide, parents without paid sick days are more than twice as likely as parents with paid sick days to send a sick child to school or day care (28 percent vs. 13 percent).

- When sick children go to school, they get sicker. And contagious illnesses spread to other children, teachers and administrators.

**Paid sick days help parents meet their children’s medical needs – leading to fewer absences and better long-term academic success.**

- Sick children have more trouble learning, and it is more difficult for teachers to teach them. Healthy children are more focused, miss fewer days of school and experience fewer behavioral problems.

- When parents have paid sick days, they can take their children to get check-ups and immunizations, which help children stay healthy.

- Paid sick days also help parents address their children’s chronic conditions, keeping manageable problems from leading to hospitalizations and additional school absences. Children with chronic conditions are more likely to fall behind academically, which leads to increased burdens on educators and diminishes the time and resources educators can devote to other children.
Paid sick days would improve outcomes for our children and ease burdens on our schools. The Healthy Families Act (H.R. 1286/S. 631) sets an important national standard for paid sick days. Its passage would be a critical step toward meeting children’s health needs.

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 recover from illness, access preventive care or provide care for a sick child or family member.
- Allow workers who are survivors of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault to use their paid sick days to recover or seek assistance related to an incident.
- Allow employers that already offer paid sick days to continue using their existing policies, as long as they meet the minimums set forth in the Healthy Families Act (for time, types of use and method of use).

Learn more and take action at www.PaidSickDays.org/action.


The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at www.NationalPartnership.org.

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