

## ***Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health***

### **PAID SICK DAYS FOR WORKERS RESULT IN BETTER HEALTH FOR EMPLOYEES AND IMPROVED PUBLIC HEALTH FOR ALL.**

- When workers have paid sick days, they can seek the medical help they need, or take time away from work to get better.
- Access to paid sick days allows workers to take time off to provide care for ill family members. Parents who have access to paid time off are more than five times as likely as parents without time off to stay home with ill children.<sup>i</sup>

### **PAID SICK DAYS PROTECT WORKERS AND THE PUBLIC FROM THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE.**

- Workers without paid sick days go to work sick because they cannot afford to miss work or risk losing their job.<sup>ii</sup>
- Sick workers infect their colleagues, which negatively affects the health and productivity of all workers.<sup>iii</sup>
- Workers who lack paid sick days work with the public every day:
  - 78% of food and public accommodation workers don't have any paid sick days.
  - Workers in child care centers, retail, and nursing homes disproportionately lack paid sick days.<sup>iv</sup>

### **PAID SICK DAYS REDUCE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF AVOIDABLE HOSPITALIZATIONS.**

- Providing workers with paid sick days decreases health care costs. For example, preventive care is key to decreasing the number of avoidable hospitalizations. Many people with chronic illnesses (e.g. asthma) could avoid hospitalization if they were able to attend outpatient visits to manage their illnesses.
- Providing workers with paid sick days removes a key barrier to health care access.
- Research shows that the proportion of people who are hospitalized for conditions such as asthma, hypertension and diabetes is higher in low-income areas. Hospitalizations for these conditions are avoidable if workers have paid sick days to seek timely outpatient and primary care. Unfortunately, low-income people are the least likely to have paid sick days.
- When workers have paid sick days they are able to make decisions to care for themselves and their family members that positively impact the health of the general population. Providing sick days decreases costs to our health care system at large.

---

<sup>i</sup>Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap. Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy – and What Can Be Done About It*, 2000.

<sup>ii</sup>*New National Survey Shows Employees Feel Pressured to go to Work, despite Being Sick with Flu*, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, 2004.

---

iii CCH Incorporated, CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, 2006; and Vicky Lovell, Valuing Good Health: An Estimate of Costs and Savings for the Healthy Families Act, Institute of Women's Policy Research, 2005.

iv Testimony of Dr. Heidi Hartmann, Institute for Women's Policy Research, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2006.