

Public Hearing testimony Bill S.B. 0063 Paid sick Days Bill

Good Afternoon honorable senators and representatives of the Committee on Labor and Public Employees: My name is Rachel Epstein, and I am a Graduate student at the UCONN School of Social Work. Also, I am employed at two jobs with one being at a group home where I do not accrue paid sick time off.

I am here today to testify on Bill #63 "An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave To Employees" I am not just testifying because I do not receive sick time but because I believe in human rights for all and I promote a healthy physical and mental society. This bill upholds my social work values and it will allow the employed population of Connecticut whom work a minimum of 520 hours a year to accrue up to five days paid sick time off of work to either take care of themselves or their sick children.

Personally, one of my jobs is at a group home with teenage girls where I have direct contact with people. Many times Sickness runs ramped throughout the work place and I get sick. When this happens I usually have to contemplate whether I can afford to take time off work without pay; whether my bills will get paid especially my school related bills. This puts me in a tough position where I may wait to take off time until my symptoms are to the point where I cannot function. Moreover, as a student of social work I know the population of teenagers in DCF custody I work with is a vulnerable population and such interruptions as illness can be quite detrimental to the youth by making them miss and be behind in school. On the other hand if I do not have money for books, gas and car insurance then I cannot go to school myself. If proposed Bill 63 passes then I along with hundreds of thousands of others in Connecticut would be able to avoid this predicament by having time to rest before illnesses worsen, avoiding spread of such illnesses as the flu or colds to larger populations as well as being capable to pay bills.

In Connecticut, approximately 44 % of the private workforce has no paid sick daysⁱ. This affects a significant portion of Connecticut residents and this should not be the case in a progressive and successful state such as Connecticut. Since Connecticut I believe is such an open-minded and innovative state it is important for Connecticut to be in the forefront of promoting and enhancing human rights and equality during this recession. In order to be a true leader Connecticut needs to be the first in the nation to pass Paid Sick Days Bill.

In the United States, yearly there is eight million cases of norovirus, which is a food-borne illnessⁱⁱ. Approximately half the cases have been connected to contamination from sick food service workers. Several months ago throughout the nation and the world the fear of the Swine Flu pandemic caused many deaths and lack of preparation. If people were allowed the basic human right of taking care of one's illness without the fear of losing their jobs then the wide spread of this deadly illness may have been reduced.

In conclusion, for opponents of this bill such as Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) the cost of having paid sick days is lower than the cost of not having them. Plus it can promote increased loyalty by employees as well as boast the workers' moral and productivity. Furthermore, please pass Bill 63 Paid Sick Days because it will help promote a healthy society and be an innovative model for the rest of the United States.

On a side note, I would like to mention I am very disgusted and horrified that the State of Connecticut and Gov. Jodi Rell decided to increase the monthly cost but left the same coverage for Charter Oak Insurance. This insurance is for the working poor and middle class who do not have access to insurance through employment.

I appreciate the opportunity to present and thank you very much for your time. I would be very happy to answer any questions.

ⁱ Brown, M.G. (3/30/2009) *Paid sick leave gains support*. Connecticut Post. ConnPost.com

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