

**Testimony of Elizabeth Deck, East Haven CT**  
**In support of SB 63: *An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees***  
**February 25, 2010**

Good Afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Ryan, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today in support of SB 63: *An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees*.

My name is Elizabeth Deck and I am currently a graduate student at the UCONN School of Social Work living in East Haven, CT. As a child of a single parent, my mother was the sole provider for my family. My mother, a strong woman, has taught me to be independent and how to take care of myself. As a single mother she faced many difficulties none more important than the financial security of our family. There were babysitter fees, rent, bills and food that regularly needed to be paid. Sick days were often not an option, forced to work long hours and often on the weekends to make ends meet. When there was no other option but to take a sick day it was often to care for me, which was frowned upon by my mother's employer who felt that wasn't a valid excuse and didn't approve of single parenting. None of these days were ever paid and my mother was often forced to make up the hours.

My personal family experience is not an uncommon occurrence for millions of Americans. By supporting such a bill that mandates paid sick days to employees, we can limit the disadvantage to those who are forced to take unpaid sick days or come to work sick. Now as an independent adult and an intern for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, I have a stronger understanding why such a bill is necessary. Women are often the ones who feel the consequences of unpaid sick days, often responsible for the caretaking of their children and in many case their aging family members. Over 22 million American working women have no paid sick days<sup>i</sup>. Half of working mothers miss work when their child gets sick. And of these mothers, half do not get paid when they take this time off<sup>ii</sup>.

Preventing illness and protecting one's health are also important components of why we need paid sick days. It has been found that women primarily work in areas focused in everyday contact with individuals, food and educational settings. As we have seen with the H1N1 virus, illness and disease can be spread rapidly. Paid sick days could decrease the number of cases. It was found by Robert Drago, a Ph.D at University of Pennsylvania, that employees who attended work while infected with H1N1 are estimated to have caused the infection of as many as 7 million co-workers<sup>iii</sup>. Women also are encouraged to receive regular checkups for routine physical exams, pelvic exams, pap tests, checkups for reproductive or sexual health problems and screenings for breast cancer and cervical cancer<sup>iv</sup>. Often employees take sick days to fit in these scheduled appointments. By paying workers to take time off employers are validating the importance of one's health and the need to protect it.

I urge the committee to support SB 63 and consider the positive outcomes of the bill and impact it will have on working families in CT. The past two years have been extremely difficult on those within Connecticut and across the country with the state of our economy. I believe it is incredibly important for our government to protect workers by ensuring time can be taken off to care for themselves and their families. Families must have the security of knowing their income will not be affected when taking necessary sick days. Thank you.

<sup>i</sup> The Institute for Women's Policy Research, Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well Being  
[http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254\\_paid sick days FS.pdf](http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254_paid sick days FS.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "Women, Work and Family Health: A Balancing Act," Issue Brief, April 2003.

<sup>iii</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research, Lack of Paid Sick Days Allowed H1N1 to Spread in the Workplace  
<http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B284sickatworkrelease.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Planned Parenthood of Southern New England <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/womens-health-4284.htm>