

913

S.B. No. 913 An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees
March 1, 2011

Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee: My name is Amanda Girardin. I am resident of Andover, Connecticut and am currently a graduate student at the UConn School of Social Work while also working two part time jobs. I am here to urge you to vote yes for SB No. 913, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees.

My last year's internship was at the Aetna Foundation Children's Center, who offers services to children who are victims of child sexual abuse and their non-offending caregivers. As an intern I would hear the complaints of caregivers, most of whom were women, who couldn't find time to schedule forensic interviews, medicals or therapy for their children because they cannot afford to take time off from work to accompany them. This is frustrating for parents, but also for the providers who deal with many missed appointments. This delay in services is detrimental to the child victims who are unable to obtain the services and assessments they need after suffering from such trauma. This delay can also hinder police investigations. Some of these female, and sometimes male, caregivers are then accused of negligence by child protective services for not getting their children the help they require. No parent or caregiver should be forced to make a decision between making financial ends meet and getting their child the help they need.

This proposed law also affects me and my co-workers on a very personal level. I have worked many jobs within the food industry while being a student and in between degrees. In addition to only making the minimum wage allowed by law while trying to save enough money to go to graduate school, and pay my bills, I have never received sick days. My choices are to stay home and lose money or go to my job sick. Mind you, my jobs have involved preparing and serving food and beverages to thousands of customers a day. Many of my co-workers are parents unable to meet their own health needs and those of their children because they needed to work to keep a roof over their head and food on the table. One man I worked with had a severely ill infant and was forced to work two jobs everyday and could never take the time to bring his baby to the hospital. Paid sick leave for this man would greatly reduce his stress improving his own mental health and allow him to take better care of his ailing child. Even my co-workers without children feel the stress of making money and consistently come to work sneezing, coughing or with a fever. People working minimum-wage, food service jobs are much more likely to be highly dependent upon those one or two days worth of wages that they miss if they take days off than are the people who currently possess paid sick leave. It is imperative not only for the health of these workers and their families but for the safety and health of consumers as well that this law be passed and people provided with paid sick leave that they have earned and deserve by putting in the time and hard work.

In my current internship working on a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness I constantly witness how easily a medical crisis can send a person or family into homelessness. For people living paycheck to paycheck the loss of just one day's work wages due to illness can mean missing that month's rents. If a person or family becomes homeless their health risks increase as does the chance that they will lose their job completely. Paid sick days could be a step towards preventing homelessness among the at risk population.

I hope I can count on your support to vote yes for SB. 913. Thank you.
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