



The Connecticut Association for Human Services
110 Bartholomew Avenue - Suite 4030
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
www.caHS.org

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Luis Caban, President
James P. Horan Executive Director
860.951.2212 x 235
860.951.6511 fax

Testimony before the Labor and Public Employees Committee
S.B. 913: An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Deputy Director
Connecticut Association for Human Services
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Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Maggie Adair, and I am Deputy Director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a 100-year-old statewide nonprofit organization that works to end poverty and engage, empower, and equip all families in Connecticut to achieve financial security.

CAHS is a partner in **Everybody Benefits, Connecticut's campaign for paid sick days**. I urge you to wage your support for **S.B. 913, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees**.

It is important to note that employers would be in compliance with this bill if they already provide any other paid leave accrued at a rate equal or greater than described in the bill. Other paid leave includes paid vacation, flextime, compensatory time, personal days or paid time off. Employers already providing one or a combination of paid time off would not have to provide additional sick days; they would simply allow the employee to use this paid time off if they or a family member are sick or in need of medical diagnosis, care or treatment, or preventative medical care; or if an employee is victim of family violence or sexual assault. This is very reasonable.

There are compelling reasons to support paid sick days.

Paid Sick Days promote a healthier work place. When employees go to work sick, they spread their germs and get other people sick. Think about people who care for the elderly in nursing homes, the school cafeteria workers who feed our children, or the restaurant workers who prepare your nice dinner out. According to research from the National Partnership for Women and Families, 78 percent of employees working in food service and accommodations lack paid sick days.

Paid Sick Days support family economic security. Low-wage workers who do not have paid sick time cannot afford to miss a day off – sick or not. Working parents risk losing their jobs if they are forced to miss a work day because they are disabled from the flu or because they need to care for a sick toddler. In this protracted recession when jobs are extremely scarce, we do not want people to lose their job simply because they or a family member are ill. The University of Chicago found that 11

percent of Americans had been fired for taking time off when sick, or for caring for a sick family member, while 12 percent had been warned that they would be fired if they took sick time.

Paid Sick Days are good for business. Employees who come to work sick are less productive and take longer to recover from illness. They are also more likely to infect co-workers, which compounds reduced productivity. When the National Partnership for Women and Families created an economic impact analysis for paid sick time legislation in Connecticut, it found the savings for businesses were larger than the costs. This bill will not affect businesses with less than 50 eligible employees, and provides a mere minimum of protection for the most vulnerable in the work force.

Paid Sick Days allow workers to seek health care early on. Workers without paid sick days are more likely to avoid seeking care and end up in expensive emergency rooms. They are less likely to receive preventative care, which would keep them healthy.

Currently 40 percent of Connecticut workers do not receive paid sick days from their employers, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The United States is the wealthiest country in the world, and yet does not provide the right for a worker to get sick. This bill will allow hard-working citizens to earn paid sick leave; it is not just given to them. **Paid sick leave is a long overdue minimum work standard.**

S.B. 913 will benefit everyone in Connecticut, especially children and parents. More than 650,000 Connecticut workers are forced to choose between their health and pay. Many of these citizens are parents who need to stay home when their children get sick. Parents should not have to risk employment in order to care for their children. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, half of mothers miss work when a child gets sick. Of these, half lose pay when they take the time off.

Our low-wage work force has the highest percentage of workers lacking paid sick days. Nationally, 77% of low-wage workers do not have paid sick days – these are the people who can least afford to miss a day of pay. These are the workers that keep the economy running: child care workers, food service workers, school bus drivers, retail clerks, and maintenance workers. One lost day of pay can mean the difference between paying for housing or putting food on the table. The right to take sick time should not be defined by employment status and income.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.