

913

Testimony IN SUPPORT of SB 913

Daniel Hayes of Deep River, CT

March 1, 2011

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Good evening members of the labor committee. -I am here to talk to you about the paid sick days bill, and how important it is that this bill gets passed. Paid sick days allow employees to care of themselves and their families.

Personally I have worked many jobs where I could not earn a single paid sick day. This meant that I was forced to choose between taking care of my health or being able to pay my bills. Often I simply could not afford to lose a day's worth of pay, so I went to work sick. Workers should not be forced to make this choice. Paid sick days allow employees to take care of themselves and their families.

Many interest groups such as the Connecticut Business and Industry Association claim that paid sick days are not necessary since so many employers already offer them, or that this bill would create costs that employers cannot afford to manage. Perhaps the CBIA has not looked at the statistics around the number of lower-wage earners who do not have paid sick days, and perhaps they have not looked at how the percentage of workers without paid sick days grows the lower the worker's wages are. If they say that small businesses can't afford to pay people when they are sick, then I wonder how such businesses can afford to pay the employees at all. Since slavery ended, employers have had to pay people who come to work. Why is it that these employers can afford to pay people who come to work, but they can't afford to give a sick day? Finally, considering that the paid sick days bill only requires that employees can earn up to five sick days a year, this is not an undue burden on small businesses. In fact, it's not a burden on them at all. The sick time earnings proposed by this bill are based on what the employee works, not on what the employer provides. Passing the paid sick days bill is simply the right thing to do for Connecticut's working families. On that note, I'd like to tell you a recent story about my own family.

———My family has recently seen the benefits of paid sick days when, my four year old niece needed to have a planned reconstructive surgery on her feet. Luckily, my brother works in a job that offers paid family leave, so he is able to stay home with her for a few months while she recovers. My father also has an administrative position in the school system where they live, so if my brother wasn't able to get that leave, my father probably would. However, my sister in law and my mother are day care workers. They do not get

any paid time off at all. How can we consider it just that those who take care of other people's children are not able to care for their own? If my brother was a low-wage earner who had no paid time off he would not have been able to give his daughter the care she needed. For other families trying to cope with the demands of a child's ~~surgery~~ surgery with no paid time off is challenging. Do they have to take the time off anyways and risk getting behind on mortgage payments? No one should have to risk homelessness because they need to stay home with their child. I don't understand how those who oppose this bill can claim that they support working families in any way, when they are clearly promoting injustice and inhumane treatment by denying basic protections that working families need.

Passing the paid sick days bill is simply the right thing to do for Connecticut's working families. Thank you for your time and please support the paid sick days bill.