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Dear Honorable members of the Committee:

I respectfully ask for your support for SB913, mandating employers provide paid sick leave to employees. As a seasoned health care provider, I believe that extending paid sick leave to all Connecticut workers will result in healthier employees, healthier workplaces, better public health practice, and potential savings in health care costs, for individuals and the State.

As a nurse practitioner in primary care, I have often seen the consequences of workers not having paid sick days. Paid sick days allow rest and self-care that may help prevent a simple illness from progressing to a more disabling illness. In the workplace, not only are sick workers less productive, but they are also likely to spread illness to others. During flu outbreaks, the CDC recommends that sick employees remain home from work. Protecting co-workers should not be the financial responsibility of the employee. It is poor public health practice to deny paid sick leave to individuals who should not come in contact with others in the workplace, whether co-workers or members of the public.

Another important example that concerns me is in the case of intestinal illnesses. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that, each year, 128,000 people are hospitalized and 3,000 people die from foodborne diseases. Employees who handle food, whether as cooks, food handlers, or servers, should not be at work when they are sick with an intestinal illness. Because of a lack of paid sick days, many sick individuals have disregarded my counsel to remain home until they are well.

Paid sick days for preventive and episodic care may help to reduce health care costs by identifying conditions that may be treated before they worsen, and by limiting inappropriate use of emergency rooms for routine care. Paid sick days may also reduce lost-work days for employers by limiting illness exposure to co-workers. Paid sick days allow workers to get the treatment they need, and stop the spread of illness.

Please support healthier workplaces by passing SB 913. Thank you.

Dorothy Phillips, RN, APRN, MS, MPH
Nurse Practitioner
Willimantic