

J/B

Testimony From Jessica DeRose

Labor and Public Employees Committee on the issue of SB913,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concern on the issue of paid sick leave being debated before you.

I am testifying as a concerned citizen and student here in Connecticut. I have very personal reasons for advocating on this topic and I beseech you remain mindful my testimony as many people are in similar situations to mine and we are in need of this protection.

I was forced to go back to school because of basic benefits and protections that are denied to many workers in our state. I found myself in the situation where it seemed like there was no way out. I was working at DSW, a shoe store, which did not hire full-time employees because they did not want to extend benefits to their workers. Part of their business practice was to cut hours right before the employee could be considered full-time. There are those that would ask, "Well, why didn't you just look for another job?" In this economy jobs are not jumping out of the woodwork. Businesses know this and are using this fact to their advantage by keeping those of us dependent on these positions below the standards that should be mandatory for every employer. Not only are we forced to work without benefits like health insurance but we also are denied the fundamental ability to care for our own health, which is even worse.

None of my coworkers had the ability to take a sick day off. If we got sick we would either have to show up to work anyway or suffer the lost income. For me, personally, I have a daughter and cannot afford to stay home. Things were even more complicated if my daughter became ill. Because I was working part-time I was not able to save enough money to go back to school and improve my vocational prospects. It was a cyclical problem; I could not get a better job without more education and I could not go to school to get a better job because I was not earning enough money to afford to go.

My case is not singular. I have a sister who is working now without sick days. I have friends with \$80,000.00 worth of student loans working at businesses with no benefits and of course no sick time. I have seen businesses seeking to cut costs by cutting benefits to workers so they can maintain high profits. This is all at the cost of the disregarded employees who are suffering because of the lack of worker protections. Having the ability to stay home when you are sick is, like I said earlier, fundamental to one's ability to care for his or her health.

Sincerely,  
Jessica DeRose  
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