

913

February 28, 2011,

Testimony in support of S.B. 913:

My name is Keith Gervase and I am here to show my support for senate bill 913.

I have worked in the service industry in the city of Hartford for over ten years and never once have I had a paid sick day. Not even as a manager in more recent years. Neither have any of my co-workers or friends in the industry that I know of.

As most industry employees will agree, if you factor in the fact that you don't have a 401k, or employer paid health insurance, you really don't make a lot of money for the time you put in. Simply put, one day's pay is something the average employee can't go without.

People working in this industry not only go without paid sick days, in most cases they go without sick days all together. There always has to be someone to cover your shift if you can't make it. If you can't find coverage, you have to be there. It kind of became part of my 'work ethic' so to say. It wasn't until I broke my collar bone and literally COULD NOT be at work that the reality of not having paid sick days sank in. At the time, I was a bartender at a fast paced restaurant and worked with my hands. I had to return to work after only two weeks because I simply could not afford to be without another days pay. Working was pretty painful for the next couple of weeks.

It is not uncommon for employees of bars and restaurants to come in sick. I've had to do it many times over the course of the past ten years. It is absolutely alarming to see how fast a cold or a flu can work its way through the staff of a restaurant. We work in an industry where we interact directly with hundreds of customers in a day. Thinking about how fast a flu spreads among a staff, it's hard to ignore the fact that customers more than likely become infected themselves due to the unsanitary conditions.

Last year, I found myself at work while I had swine flu. Although I didn't even find out I had H1N1 until the worst of it was over, I still felt guilty for being at work. But in my case, without health insurance I couldn't afford to miss a day at work AND see a doctor as well (almost 300\$ for the visit, and the blood work). I may not be the most financially responsible person, but I think that this is the reality for the majority of people working in food service.

I support the paid sick day legislation for what I see as obvious reasons. Thank you.