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Testimony for Margaret Camacho

Labor and Public Employee Committee on the topic of SB913 paid sick days

I would like to first express my appreciation that the committee is hearing essential testimony on issue of paid sick days. I say it is essential because it is the public who will be deeply impacted by this legislation. Protecting employees here in Connecticut is one of the crucial roles of the legislature.

I am and have been an ESOL teacher here in Hartford for twenty-seven years. In that time I have seen the impact on student's lives and families' lives when they do not have this necessary and basic proviso. I am therefore, as I hope you are, in support of the paid sick days legislation.

The most obvious repercussion of denying employees paid sick time is that they will go to work sick. Aside from this being detrimental to their health it is pernicious to the public. Giving employees the opportunity to stay home when ill is key to stemming the spread of viruses. This includes among coworkers as well as the public.

In the classroom there are other repercussions felt from the denial of this critical safeguard. I will give two different examples from my experience. At the lower grade levels students are forced to go to school sick because their parents are not able to stay home and care for them. One of the central roles of a parent is the care of their children. This fundamental responsibility is being denied to parents by the denial of paid sick time. The children are then forced to school much the same way their parents are forced to work when sick. The viruses spread quickly amongst children and soon you have a virus going around the whole school, to the teachers and the administration. This increases costs to the school system. The second repercussion is felt at the higher, grade levels. At the high school level students are forced to stay home when a younger sibling becomes ill and the parents are not able to take the time off of work to care for them. This means that students who should be in attendance at their institutions of learning are instead forced into the roles denied to their parents. Students staying home to care for younger siblings are losing education-hours. They also, many times, become sick themselves and miss out on more school.

It is critical that we allow parents to fulfill their parental charge and care for their children. It is wrong and immoral to deny this. These have not been hypothetical situations that I have described but are the real experience I have observed in my many years as a public school teacher here in Hartford.

Sincerely,
Margaret Camacho
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