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National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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**Public Hearing – Labor & Public Employees Committee**  
**SB 913 An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees**  
**March 1, 2011**

Good afternoon. My name is Marcia Bok and I am testifying today on behalf of the Ct. Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers in favor of paid sick leave. This has been an ongoing struggle, but with the Governor and legislative support, and accumulating evidence about how important this legislation is, I am hopeful we can seal the deal in this legislative session. I know that the big argument against paid sick leave is that it is an additional burden on businesses who cannot afford additional expenses. But there is evidence that this legislation enhances, rather than depletes, resources.

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 44 million workers lacked paid sick days in 2010; only 58 percent of private sector employees in the U.S. had access to paid sick leave; 77 percent of food service workers lacked access to paid sick leave. This report notes that although hypothetically eligible, many workers do not have access to these benefits due to job tenure issues. On average, workers had to wait about 3.5 months to access paid sick leave. Fewer than one-quarter of food preparation and serving workers can use paid sick days. Epidemiological data indicate the strong relationship between food handlers and food-borne and other contagious illnesses. If employees come to work sick, this is clearly a financial burden on employers.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research notes that San Francisco enacted a Paid Sick Leave Ordinance in 2007. Under the PSLO, any part-time or full-time employee who works in San Francisco – even for a company that is based elsewhere – earns one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked. A survey of employers found that two-thirds supported the law. Only one in seven employers reported adverse effects on profitability. Workers generally did not abuse the policy and employers did not need to use sanctions to control abuse. Among employers with fewer than 10 employees, one-third had not implemented the policy. Nearly all firms with 10 or more workers offered paid sick days at the time of the survey.

There are two additional brief points I would like to make. Most full-time salaried employees have paid sick leave. Even part-time salaried employees generally have these benefits. It is the hourly worker who is hardest hit – and this includes many low-income women. We know that part-time work is increasing, although most low-income women would prefer to work full-time if they could because they cannot afford to work part-time. We also know how expensive and difficult it is for low-income mothers to access quality and affordable child care – particularly on short notice. When poor women need to take time off from work to care for a sick child, she not only loses her pay, she may also lose her job.

We need to work very hard not to discriminate against low-income workers, particularly women with children. We often make assumptions about this population that are simply not true. If we trust that salaried workers will not abuse the system, this trust should definitely be extended to poor women who are eager to work to support their families. I thank you for your attention to this important matter.