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**Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, Manager Public Affairs & Community Organizing
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
In Support of SB 913, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees
March 1, 2011**

Good Afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee; My name is Gretchen Raffa, from Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of SB 913, *An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees*.

Our agency serves over 70,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services. As health care providers we understand the importance of women having routine preventive health care exams such as screenings for cervical and breast cancer, pap smears and other reproductive health care needs including prenatal care. These routine exams often require women to take time off from their job more and spend 68% more out of pocket on health care costs than men in part because of their reproductive health care needs.

We at Planned Parenthood believe that all women have the right to control their own fertility and have the right to a healthy pregnancy and bear healthy babies. Prenatal care is critical for a healthy pregnancy and the development of a healthy child. Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight and five times more likely to die than those born to mothers who do get care.¹

What we know is the burden of inadequate paid sick days falls heaviest on women who are more likely to be the primary care givers to their sick children and other family members. Half of working mothers miss work when their child gets sick. And of these mothers, half do not get paid when they take this time off. Among low-income working mothers, two in three report losing pay.² Women who need paid sick days the most are those most likely not to have them therefore having to make the difficult decision of losing wages to care for themselves or their family. No woman should have to risk her economic wellbeing or her health, yet a woman is often forced to decide between her health and the health of her child or her paycheck.

As advocates for reproductive justice we must consider all aspects of a woman's life including those that may affect her economic stability. We support paid sick day policy which promotes women coming to work healthy, having the chance to care for sick children and family members at home, receiving preventive health care services while having the income security to support her decisions. In addition, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England has a paid sick day policy offering 12 sick days annually on an accrual basis for our 250 employees because we understand the health and financial benefits that come with such a policy for both our employees and the patients we serve in our 18 health centers across the state.

We urge you to support SB 913, to protect the basic rights of Connecticut workers by guaranteeing paid sick days and promoting the health and economic security of all CT citizens. Thank you.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Women's Health, Prenatal Care
<http://womenshealth.gov/faq/prenatal-care.cfm>

² Kaiser Family Foundation, "Women, Work and Family Health: A Balancing Act," Issue Brief, April 2003.