

9/13

Testimony from Ruth Camacho

Labor and Public Employees Committee on the issue of SB913,

I am writing to express my strong support for the upcoming paid sick time legislation. I work as a registered nurse in a community hospital and see first-hand how detrimental it can be for employees to come to work ill in an environment of immunocompromised patients. Ironically, I myself do not receive paid sick time from my employer because I was hired as a per diem worker since hospitals are cutting costs by not hiring nurses into benefited positions.

When a person gets sick and cannot take care of himself properly by resting at home, he ends up developing secondary, more serious illnesses that many times result in a hospital admission. Sadly, many of these admissions could have been prevented by simply taking time off from work to recover. A simple cold now has developed into bronchitis, which if left untreated will become full-fledged pneumonia. This, in turn, drives up the cost of healthcare for everyone and forces providers to prescribe costly medications. Instead of merely a sick visit to one's primary care provider at the onset of an illness, we are now seeing people wait until they are sick enough to come directly to the Emergency Department, a three-fold cost increase for our healthcare system.

I know personally how difficult it is to have to choose between paying your bills or giving yourself the proper time off to rest when you are sick. As a per diem RN, I do not receive paid sick days (or even health insurance) through my work. I have found myself in a situation where I have been forced to attend work, where I care for infants and pregnant women, when I was sick. I am not alone in this challenging position as many of my coworkers are also unprotected by this right to paid sick days. The outcomes for patient safety and public health can be catastrophic when the people taking care of you are not allowed to take care of themselves. After all, I would not want a nurse with a fever calculating narcotic dosages or handing infants if I were the patient.

It is overwhelmingly obvious that this legislation is key to basic workers rights. Public health is at stake here, not to mention the fiscal tax not having paid sick days is placing on our already burdened healthcare system. These are the reasons I fully support the measure to provide our workers with paid sick days.

Sincerely,

Ruth Camacho
West Hartford