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February 2011

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 913 for Paid Sick Days

To whom it may concern,

I am submitting this written testimony in the hopes that it will help build support for the upcoming vote on paid sick days.

As a recent graduate and a member of the construction industry, I can appreciate the effects of this bill on multiple levels. As a graduate, I understand what it is like to enter a struggling workforce that cannot afford to employ the people that are already currently working in it, much rather my peers in the class of 2010. In spite of the economy, I was fortunate enough to land a job in my field of choice at a third-party inspection firm. However this job, like most in the industry, is an hourly wage; so I also understand what it is like to have your hours vary from week to week. The variation can be from any number of reasons but the reason is usually New England weather. During the winter months, the entire industry slows down for obvious reasons. I have healthcare and car insurance payments, gas, food, rent, and of course the ever-present student loans. When one works an hourly wage, sick days are a luxury you cannot afford; literally. This is especially true in the construction industry and especially during the winter months.

So what does one do when they cannot afford to take the day off? They go to work sick of course! What does this mean for the construction industry? Well if you take into account that 7.7 million Americans were employed in the industry in 2006, it is easy to see that come flu season there could be a lot of potential sick people driving to work to go walk around on an active worksite.

Most people can easily imagine what it is like on the inside of that high fence because what they hear is pretty accurate: there is a lot going on and it is all very loud. A person walking from one end of a site to another must keep their wits about them at all times or risk serious injury or death. Speaking from personal experience; I'm not so good on my toes when I have a head cold and I'm not alone.

So why don't I just take something to relieve the symptoms so I can work? Well, most medicines that help relieve the symptoms of any manageable illness prevent one from being a fully functioning member of the workforce anyway. Almost every cough suppressant and flu medicine specifically says "do not operate machinery while taking this (I paraphrase.)" What this means is that if a crane operator wanted to go into work when they were sick, they would have to go in feeling miserable because at least that way they'd still be lucid. This also means however that the guy swinging the 29,000 lb concrete slab through the air could sneeze or break into a nasty coughing fit.

There is a final aspect to how the construction industry could benefit from this legislation and that involves taking off days that would drastically affect your health in a negative way. This past year I have worked outside in both record high and record low temperatures and both affected my health. I developed a brief bout of heatstroke that triggered my vertigo during a triple digit day in New Haven over the summer. Luckily, I developed it on a Friday afternoon and I was able to recover over the weekend. Had it happened on a Tuesday I would have had to take off multiple days from work. With this legislation I would only have to take the one day off, saving myself from having to take the other two, and not having my income affected.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I applaud the State of Connecticut for considering this bill and I eagerly await your decision. I hope you make the choice that helps the greatest amount of my fellow CT citizens possible.

- William Doling