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**Testimony of Jennifer C. Jaff, Esq.
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In Support of Raised Bill No. 913**

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Good afternoon. We appreciate this opportunity to submit written testimony to the Labor Committee on Raised Bill no. 913.

Advocacy for Patients with Chronic Illness provides free information, advice and advocacy services to patients with chronic illnesses. As you can imagine, we get many calls from consumers with chronic illnesses whose illness, or whose children's illness, causes them to miss work, at least occasionally. Although they may be eligible for unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, they suffer financial hardship as a result. For those who are not entitled to leave under the FMLA, a sick day may even result in the loss of a job.

Roughly half of all Americans have at least one chronic health condition, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Every one of them – or their parents, if they are children – will need to take time off for a doctor appointment or a treatment. That is the nature of chronic illness. Patients with chronic illnesses often have compromised or medically suppressed immune systems, which results in a greater rate of communicable illness, such as colds and flu, as well. Without the ability to take a sick day, an employee may not only prolong his own illness, but he may pass it onto others in the workplace.

Providing paid sick days removes a strong obstacle to accessing health care for the chronically ill, who too often have to choose between caring for their health and keeping their jobs. And the failure of patients with chronic illnesses to access care in a timely manner affects all of us; when a patient delays getting care, their condition may worsen and become harder to control. This may result in a downward spiral that ends with the loss of the job. And without jobs, many of us lose health insurance. And without health insurance, our health deteriorates further, and the cost of our health care is borne by all of the taxpayers. Providing a modest number of paid sick days is far more cost-effective and efficient than bearing escalating health care costs.

Finally, paid sick days is good business. As someone who runs a small business, I would prefer to provide a small number of paid sick days than to suffer increased employee turnover and the concomitant need for retraining, for example. And – yes, this matters – it simply is the right thing to do, engendering loyalty among employees.

In sum, for people with chronic illnesses, paid sick days are essential. Don't exclude us from the workplace; instead, give us a little help. We will reward our employers with loyalty and excellence.

Thank you.