

**Name:** Sarah Ganong

**Title:** State Director

**Organization or Agency:** Working Families Power

**Topic:** SB01178 - AA EXPANDING CONNECTICUT PAID SICK DAYS.  
Supports

**Testimony:**

My name is Sarah Ganong, I'm a Hartford resident, and I'm the State Director of Working Families Power. Our organization is a founding member of the Recovery for All coalition. Thanks for the opportunity to testify in strong support of four bills today - HB 6859, SB 1177, SB 1178, and SB 1180.

In Connecticut today, a handful of individuals and corporations are continuing to amass wealth – while hundreds of thousands of working people struggle every single day to make ends meet. As a state with so many resources, Connecticut should be a leading example of equity and opportunity for all, not just the wealthy and well-connected. The scale of the crisis before us demands a bold response, which is why I'm pleased the Labor Committee is considering such important priorities here today.

We know that four bills before you are linked policies – because workers don't only face a single issue in the workplace. Unpredictable schedules at restaurants impact the tips workers are able to earn each week. Lack of paid sick days means that workers lose wages if they need to take unpaid time off while sick. And we know that the impact of current business practices and state laws are not distributed equally. People of color, low wage workers, and women are disproportionately impacted – and these policies are a first step towards equity in Connecticut's laws, in our jobs, and in our communities.

**Paid Sick Days:**

Our organization has been in the fight for paid sick days in Connecticut since the beginning, as our state passed the first paid sick days law in the country. Unfortunately, however, the rest of the country has sped ahead, leaving Connecticut in the dust, with more than 20 jurisdictions now covered. The bill before us today modernizes and updates our law, particularly in light of a global pandemic reaching the third anniversary this month.

Working Families Power supports SB 1178 as a tool to guarantee all Connecticut workers paid sick days – only around 12% currently have this guarantee under our existing law. Connecticut's law applies to employers of 50 or more and covers certain service occupations. "Service worker" includes restaurant workers, home health aides, retail workers, and others. Nationally chartered nonprofits that provide education, child care and recreation, for example, are exempt from the law. Legislation should instead require all employers, regardless of size, industry, or type of work, to provide paid sick time. Paid sick time is a racial justice issue – workers of color are over-represented in industries that do not provide paid sick days (and aren't required to under current Connecticut law), and this gap is even more harmful during the COVID-19 crisis for women and folks of color who are over-represented in frontline jobs yet continue to lack access to supports such as paid sick time. It's essential that our laws not differentiate between size or classification of employers regarding paid sick time – all workers deserve paid, rather than unpaid, sick leave. Offering unpaid leave does not address the problem before us if the worker is still unable to afford time off.

But expanding coverage isn't enough – workers currently are not given an adequate amount of sick time each year either. The number of hours should be expanded from 40 to 80, and the waiting period eliminated. Finally, aligning the definition of family with the definition used in Connecticut's landmark paid family and medical leave act, passed in 2019, will allow workers to take care of a sick child of any age, as well as their chosen family or family members who experience family violence or sexual assault. Finally, we know that access to paid sick days reduces ER visits, especially among patients on Medicaid. Without paid sick days access, ER care often replaces routine or preventative medical appointments –

leading to high health insurance costs for businesses and higher expenses (and likely worse health outcomes) for the individual.