

## Paid Sick Leave

*June 2015*

- **Fully forty-three percent (43%) of women working in the private sector are unable to take a single day of paid sick leave, and 54% of all working mothers have less than five paid sick days per year for use in caring for their sick children.**<sup>1</sup>
- **With their combined economic and care-giving responsibilities, working women are particularly impacted by the absence of paid sick and family care leave.** In a 2007 survey, 20% of women with children indicated they or a family member had been fired or disciplined by an employer for taking time off to care for their own illness or that of a sick child or other family member.<sup>2</sup> An absence from work of just four days in a month would place a two-child family headed by a single (usually female) parent earning the average wage for workers without paid sick leave (\$10 an hour) below the federal poverty line.<sup>3</sup>
- **Over 90% of Americans believe that the provision of paid sick leave would be helpful in improving workers' lives.** A September 2013 survey found that 91% believed "providing up to ten days a year of paid time off if you are sick or have to take care of a family member" would be useful, with fully 78% responding that it would be very useful. Support was a bit stronger among women overall (93% useful, including 82% very useful) and unmarried women (93% useful, including 84% very useful).<sup>4</sup>
- The **Healthy Families Act** was introduced in both houses of Congress in 2015 (H.R. 932/S. 497).<sup>5</sup> This legislation would establish a national standard for sick pay by:
  - Requiring employers of 15 or more employees to permit workers to earn at least one hour of job-protected paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked, up to a maximum of 56 sick leave hours per year (unless the employer chooses to set a higher limit); and
  - Authorizing the use of such paid sick leave to recover from their own illness or seek preventive care for themselves; care for the medical needs of family members; or seek medical attention, assist a related person, take legal action or provide other assistance in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.<sup>6</sup>



- **The multiple benefits of providing paid sick days include:**
  - **enhancing the economic security of families** (with 23% of adults in the U.S. reporting a job loss or threat of job loss for taking sick leave),
  - **reducing the practice of “presenteeism”** (working while sick) – estimated to cost the economy \$160 billion a year in lost productivity,
  - **decreasing health care costs** (with an estimated saving of \$1.1 billion a year from reductions in emergency room visits);<sup>7</sup>
  - **reducing workplace contagion** (adults without paid sick leave are 1.5 times more likely to go to work with contagious diseases than those with paid sick leave); and
  - **curbing workplace injuries** (workers who have access to paid sick leave are 28% less likely to be injured on the job than those without such access).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families, “Fact Sheet: Working Women Need Paid Sick Days,” April 2013, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/working-women-need-paid-sick-days.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families, “Fact Sheet: Working Women Need Paid Sick Days,” April 2013, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/working-women-need-paid-sick-days.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Elise Gould, Kai Filion, and Andrew Green, “The Need for Paid Sick Days,” Economic Policy Institute, June 29, 2011, <http://s4.epi.org/files/temp2011/BriefingPaper319-2.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> “The Shriver Report/CAP/AARP Frequency Questionnaire,” [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Women\\_fq.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Women_fq.pdf); and “Open Field Foundation,” [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/OpenField\\_bbk\\_091113\\_supplement\\_GenderRaceUNWT.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/OpenField_bbk_091113_supplement_GenderRaceUNWT.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/932>; and Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/497>.

<sup>6</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families, “The Healthy Families Act,” February 2015, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/the-health-families-act-fact-sheet.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families, “The Healthy Families Act,” February 2015, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/the-health-families-act-fact-sheet.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families, “Fact Sheet: Paid Sick Days Lead to Cost Savings for All,” April 2013, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-lead-to-cost-savings-for-all.pdf>.