



New Jersey Time to Care Coalition
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Workers, Small Business Owners, and Advocates Voice Support for a Strong Earned Sick and Safe Days Standard for New Jersey

Trenton – Today the New Jersey Assembly Labor Committee will vote on A1827, the Earned Sick and Safe Days legislation. The Time to Care Coalition and its member groups applaud the Assembly Labor Committee members, and the bill sponsor Assemblywoman Pam Lampitt for her unwavering position to guarantee a basic standard of earned sick days for all New Jersey’s workers.

“Nearly 1.2 million New Jersey workers do not have access to paid sick leave, jeopardizing their health and the health of other employees and customers. To combat this, I have introduced legislation that will establish standards for employers to provide earned sick leave to their employees,” said **Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt** (D- Camden/Burlington). “I look forward to the bill advancing in the Assembly Labor Committee today, and I am very eager to see this legislation signed into law so all New Jersey working men and women are able to take a paid sick day when they need one.”

The NJ Time to Care Coalition supports strong state Earned Sick and Safe Days legislation to allow New Jersey workers earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to a maximum of 72 hours (9 days) in a calendar year. The legislation guarantees workers this basic standard of paid sick days that they can take to recover from illness or seek preventative medical care as well as provide care for family. In addition, workers can use the time to deal with issues related to domestic violence or sexual assault and to attend a child’s school-related meetings. Businesses that have paid time off and vacation time policies that are provided in the same amounts and that can be used for the same purposes and under the same conditions as under the proposed earned sick days law would not have to change their policies.

The Coalition strongly believes that per diem workers should be covered under the Earned Sick and Safe Days legislation. There are many workers who are employed “daily” who rely on a day’s pay, often piecing together an income with several employers. Additionally, per diem workers are often in jobs where they are in contact with the public providing them with important health services such as, nursing home workers, home health aides, visiting nurses, and behavioral health workers, to name just a few, and it is crucially important to the public health protection intent of the law that they also be covered.

"Those most in need of earned sick days are the least likely to have them. Only 1 in 4 low-income workers, who are least able to afford a day without pay, have access to earned sick days," said **Karen White, Director of Policy Analysis and Community Engagement at the Center for Women and Work at Rutgers University**. "About 4 of 5 New Jersey food service and hotel workers don't have a single earned sick day; neither do the majority of those who staff child care centers, retail stores and nursing homes. These workers know that going to work sick can also jeopardize the health of those they serve – yet losing pay or employment can mean serious economic hardship."

New Jersey's bill comes at a time of increasing momentum across the U.S. to provide earned sick days for workers – currently 42 jurisdictions across the country, including nine states and D.C. and thirteen municipalities in New Jersey have already adopted an earned sick days policy for their workers. A survey of business owners in San Francisco, where they have had an earned sick days policy since 2006, found that two-thirds of business owners support the policy and six in seven employers report no negative impact on profitability. Another report found that the typical San Franciscan worker, many who can earn up to nine days under the law, use only three paid sick days a year.

With over one million NJ workers still without access to paid sick leave, comprehensive state-wide paid sick day policy is long overdue. These workers represent a public health risk. They should not have to choose between infecting the public or economic hardship. Moreover, the numerous academic studies done on the impact of paid sick leave have shown no measurable economic harm, no job losses or business relocations, in the jurisdictions that have comprehensive policies in place. Passing this legislation for all workers will be a win-win for all who live or eat in the Garden State," said **Marcia Marley, Executive Director of Blue Wave New Jersey**.

Economists say job retention policies like earned sick time help reduce unemployment and strengthen economic recovery. In Jersey City, which has had an earned sick days law in place since 2014, a survey of business showed that they experienced significant benefits, including a reduction in the number of sick employees coming to work, an increase in productivity, an improvement in the quality of new hires and a reduction in employee turnover.

"I once had an employee ruin thousands of dollars' worth of custom woodworking because he came in to work sick from the flu," said **Tony Sandkamp, owner of the custom woodworking business Sandkamp Woodworks in Jersey City**. "But the worst part was that he could have seriously injured or maimed himself because he was so concerned with getting that paycheck. Since then I've offered earned sick days to my employees. Their health and safety is vital to my business, as is their loyalty. After offering earned sick days I've had no turnover, which helps lower my operating costs."

Many workers are forced to go to work sick for fear of losing their job or because financially they cannot lose a day's pay. For a low-income family without earned sick days, going 3.5 days without wages is equivalent to losing a month's groceries.

"Nearly forty percent of New Jersey workers are faced with the difficult decision to work or lose wages while they are sick, because they don't have access to paid sick days. Many of these people are low-income and could face retaliation or the loss of their job for taking time off, said **Renee Koubiadis, Executive Director of the Anti-Poverty Network**. "Worse they lose

valuable wages to their family's economic security. It is time that low-income workers are treated with dignity and respect when it comes to caring for themselves or a child when they are ill."

"The decision between suffering through work shifts to retain our jobs, or choosing treatment and time for our well-being and recovery," said **Brian Kulas, Garden State Leader with the Anti-Poverty Network**, "it is a ruthless ultimatum we continuously face without the protection of guaranteed paid sick days."

Earned sick days help to protect the public health, without them, workers are more likely to go to work sick, putting the health of their co-workers and public at risk while dragging down business productivity. Not having earned sick days is associated with an 18 percentage point increase in ill employees spreading diseases at work.

"When we get sick, we need paid time off. It's a matter of respecting our health. It can't come down to a decision between getting paid or getting better. And it can't be just us who live in cities with ordinances to be covered. Nor can it be just full time workers; temp workers must be covered too! We need a statewide bill to make sure we're all covered!" said **Reynalda Cruz of New Labor**, a worker organization.

"Too many hard working New Jerseyans are facing difficult decisions about taking care of their health and the health of their loved ones or paying their bills," said **Jesse Burns, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey**. "Earned sick days legislation not only eases this unnecessary burden, it is good for the health of our communities and our economy."

Many family caregivers face immense challenges to manage both their caregiving responsibilities and the jobs they need – and research shows that only about half of all family caregivers in the U.S. who have paying jobs can earn paid sick days to care for their own health needs or those of their loved ones.

1.1 million New Jersey family caregivers help their loved ones live at home and out of more costly institutions. The majority of these caregivers are working. Enacting earned sick days legislation will help to ensure that they do not have to fear losing their paychecks, or even their jobs, to provide this essential care," said **Crystal McDonald, Associate State Director – Advocacy at AARP New Jersey**. "There is broad support, across party lines, for enacting this legislation. 82% of voters age 45+ support requiring employers to provide earned sick days," she added.

The Earned Sick and Safe Days bill will also help survivors of domestic and sexual violence access critical services without risking their financial security, providing them the support and job stability they need to escape and address violence.

"Economic safety and stability is critical to a survivor of domestic violence and their ability to safely leave an abusive relationship. The need to take time off from work to pursue domestic violence related services often prevents victims from accessing the programming they may need," said **Nicole Morella, Director of Public Policy and Communications at the NJ Coalition to End Domestic Violence**. "Victims fear losing much-needed wages related to the time off, or fear losing their employment altogether. Assembly bill 1827 will help to reduce this barrier for victims, and will increase victims' access to the life-saving services they need."

Earned sick days make it possible to be a good employee and a good parent. Research shows that when parents are able to care for them at home, sick children get better sooner and reduce the risk of spreading the illness to their classmates.

"NJ's children and families need Earned and Sick Safe Days. Parents need them so they can take time off when they are sick, or when their child is sick. And they need them so that the people who take care of their children, such as child care staff, can take time off when they are sick, instead of going to work and possibly infecting the children they are taking care of who then go home and infect their parents! For families of children with special healthcare needs, this legislation will support their ability to take their children to the doctor," said **Diana Autin, Executive Co-Director of the Statewide Parents Advocacy Network**. "And for all parents, the provision that allows the use of this time to attend school-related meetings will be a lifesaver! SPAN strongly supports this legislation that is critical for all the children and families we serve."

Providing earned sick days would ensure that no one has to choose between a paycheck and caring for their own health or that of a sick family member. The Legislature should move quickly to pass the bill so families across the state can take time to care when they need it without fear of losing critical income – or even their job. This common-sense policy would provide a minimum standard of earned sick days for workers and would boost New Jersey's economy, making the Garden State a healthier place to live and work.

The New Jersey Time to Care Coalition is a broad-based group of community, advocacy, union, religious, research, and academic organizations working to support policies that strengthen communities by ensuring that working families can balance their responsibilities at home and on the job.

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