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Contact: Yarrow Willman-Cole, 973-368-5112, yarrowworld@gmail.com

New Jersey Working Families, Business Owners Urge President Obama to Support Earned Sick Days and Paid Family Leave Policies.

Today the White House Announces New Steps to Strengthen Working Families across America

New Jersey working families called on President Obama to use the bully pulpit to push forward earned sick days and paid family leave policies in his State of the Union address. Today, his administration announced proposals to strengthen the middle class by giving working families the flexibility to balance their families and jobs. [Letters](#), from New Jersey working families, parents, and [business owners](#), were sent to the President as part of a package from 21 state coalitions fighting for these policies that make up [Family Values @ Work](#).

In one of the letters, New Jerseyan Jason Butkowski, wrote about his experience as new father to premature twins, crediting New Jersey's Family Leave Insurance program for allowing him and wife the time off work to be able to bond with and nurture their children in their first six months of life.

[Butkowski wrote](#), "New Jersey's Paid Family Leave program made the difference in my young family's life – paid family leave and earned sick time should be a right of all American working families, and not just reserved for those lucky few who live in a state where it is offered. Please use the power of the pulpit afforded to you through the annual State of the Union address to push national paid family leave and earned sick time programs."

Another New Jerseyan, [working mother Safiyyah Muhammad](#), wrote to the President about the need for paid sick days, sharing her experience of being pressured to take her sick child to work with her, being told, "if you don't come in to work today, don't come to work at all". Muhammad went on to express her views, "No parent...should ever have to choose their welfare over the welfare of others due to the fear of losing wages or work hours....Without paid sick days, there is no way around the fact that when I take time off to care for myself or my family, I lose work hours and pay."

Today, President Obama is taking the very action that New Jersey workers have encouraged. By writing to the President and sharing their personal experiences balancing work and family, they articulated the urgency to update workplace policies to reflect the needs of working families. Earlier today, President Obama signed a presidential memorandum directing agencies to allow federal workers to take 6 weeks of paid sick leave to care for a new child or ill family

members. Later tonight, Obama is expected to [outline a new plan](#) to help more states create paid leave programs like New Jersey's successful Family Leave Insurance program. The President will also call on Congress to pass the Healthy Families Act that would guarantee working Americans the right to earn sick days, applauding sick day legislation that has been passed at the local level in municipalities across the country and in New Jersey.

New Jersey has long been at the forefront of implementing laws that support working families. Family Leave Insurance has allowed countless workers to care for their severely ill family members and helped even more parents be able to take time to bond with their new children. And thanks to the passage of [Earned Sick Days ordinances in 8 municipalities](#), an estimated 140,000 New Jerseyans are able, or will soon be able to earn paid sick days. These advances in New Jersey, along with the President's actions today, demonstrate that there is clear momentum that will drive the push for more family friendly workplace policies across the country and the state.

For full text of all the letters, [click here](#).

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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.