



New Jersey Time to Care Coalition
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Lawmakers, Workers, Advocates and Business Groups Laud Legislation to Secure Economic Security for Women and Families

Trenton – State lawmakers and members of the New Jersey Time to Care Coalition came together Monday, on the coalition’s lobby day, to celebrate legislation that would enact sweeping changes for women, workers and working families throughout New Jersey. The Earned Sick and Safe Day legislation (A1827/S2171), expected to pass in the Senate Labor Committee and receive full passage by the NJ Assembly on Monday, would ensure a basic standard of earned sick days for all New Jersey workers. Currently, more than \$1.2 million New Jersey workers can’t take paid time off to care for themselves or loved ones during a time of illness.

“Guaranteeing workers the ability to earn paid sick days would help ensure workers do not have to choose between their health and their economic security. Workers are better able to take care of themselves and their families while feeling secure in their jobs,” **said Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt (D-6)**. “It’s a simple matter of respect for the 1.2 million employees throughout New Jersey who are put in an unfair position of losing income when they or their families are ill.”

Lawmakers and coalition members also lauded the New Jersey Pay Equity Act (A1/S104) expected to be passed by both the Assembly and Senate Monday. If passed the law would help bridge the wage gap between men and women, and bring equal pay to minority workers, in what would be the nation’s strongest pay equity bill. Champions of these separate but related bills noted they addressed longstanding inequities faced by women, caregivers and low and middle-income families and while providing New Jerseyans everywhere with some of the tools they need to lead healthier lives.

“In 2018 there is no reason why people should be paid unequal wages for equal work. This bill will allow women the opportunity to recover lost wages, and make it harder for employers to hide discriminatory wage practices. I’m glad we are, at long last, sending this to the Governor’s desk,” **said Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-37)**.

The NJ Time to Care Coalition has been at the forefront of these women and family friendly workplace policies which are sweeping the nation. 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. The coalition strongly supports New Jersey’s proposed legislation because it provides a basic standard guaranteeing workers paid days off that they can take to recover from illness or seek preventative medical care as well as provide

care for family. Currently, 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.

"Today New Jersey made historic progress to give women and working families economic security through two strong and urgently needed family friendly workplace policies. These measures will change countless lives for the better. We applaud Senator Loretta Weinberg and Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt, the lead sponsors of both bills, the co-sponsors of these two bills, as well as Senate President Sweeney and Speaker Coughlin, for making the economic success and security of women and working families a priority," **said Dena Mottola Jaborska, Associate Director at New Jersey Citizen Action and Coalition Convener.**

"The expansion of Earned Sick Day coverage to workers across the state is a long time coming. We continue to urge legislators to ensure a dip in health doesn't directly result in an economic downward spiral for workers, nor as the origination of a public health crisis because sick workers made the only choice truly available to them," **said Analilia Mejia, Executive Director at the New Jersey Working Families Alliance.**

Workers affected by the lack of access to earned sick days attend the event to underscore the need for a statewide earned sick days law.

"When I worked in retail, my store manager threatened to fire me because I asked for time off since my son had a viral infection. Afraid to lose my job, I took my son on two buses for two hours to work with me. I was scolded and humiliated. After six years of activism, I still stand proud to be a part of this tireless effort to bring awareness to this public health crisis," **said Saffiyah A. Muhammad, an East Orange mother of four.**

"I need guaranteed sick days because I have chronic bronchitis and I work at Walmart. Without this law, Walmart can hold my sick days against me, even to the point of termination," **said Donna Fotiadis, a Walmart worker and member of OUR Walmart.**

Research also demonstrates that earned sick days are good for business, and many businesses and business owners have embraced this policy. 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. In Jersey City, which has had an earned sick days law in place since 2014, a survey of businesses 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.

"We support the proposal to require employers to offer their employees earned, paid sick time," said **Richard Lawton, Executive Director of the New Jersey Sustainable Business Council.** "We believe that doing so represents a clear case in which economic, community and personal interests are aligned and mutually supporting. Businesses that provide paid sick days benefit through improved morale and productivity, lower turnover costs, and a healthier workplace. Earned, paid sick leave is an example of when the right thing to do is also good for the bottom line."

Establishing a base standard for earned sick days would benefit family caregivers, many of whom face immense challenges to manage both their caregiving responsibilities and the jobs they need. 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.

“This common sense workplace flexibility is critical to ensuring that family caregivers can provide care for their loved ones without fear of losing their paychecks or even their jobs. Our state is home to 1.1 million caregivers who help their loved ones to live at home and out of more costly institutions. Earned sick time is a win-win for families, for public health, and for the state,” concluded **Crystal McDonald, Associate State Director – Advocacy at AARP New Jersey**.

The New Jersey Time to Care Coalition is a coalition 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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Sponsors of the March 26th Women and Worker’s Justice Lobby Day: Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey; AARP New Jersey; BlueWaveNJ; Health Professionals and Allied Employees; League of Women Voters of New Jersey; The Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey; MomsRising; National Association of Social Workers NJ; New Jersey Sustainable Business Council; New Jersey Citizen Action; New Jersey Main Street Alliance; OUR Walmart; Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey; UltraViolet; and Women's Environment & Development Organization.