



Providing working families with "time to care" means strong families, strong workplaces, and strong communities!

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## **NJ Women Leaders Mark Women's Equality Day with Renewed Call on the State Legislature to Pass Earned Sick Days Bill**

*Letter underscores that women cannot achieve equality without family friendly workplace policies*

Newark – Prominent women from across New Jersey are marking Women's Equality Day today by issuing a [letter](#) to the entire New Jersey Legislature urging them once again to pass the NJ Earned Sick and Safe Days bill (A2354). The bill has advanced through two committees in the Assembly and one Senate committee, but floor votes in both houses are still pending.

Women's Equality Day is a day proclaimed every year by the United States President to commemorate the granting of the vote to women throughout the country. Women in the United States were granted the right to vote on August 26, 1920, when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution was certified as law. Today is the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

“Today more than eighty women are calling on the Legislature to pass the NJ Earned Sick and Safe Days bill,” said **Phyllis Salowe-Kaye**, executive director of New Jersey Citizen Action and spokesperson for the NJ Time to Care Coalition. “In 1920, winning the vote was a major step closer to equality for women, but 95 years later, women are still not equal. The adoption of family friendly workplace policies is urgently needed to bring women another step closer to equality in America.”

**Gloria Steinem**, writer and activist involved in feminist and other social justice movements for over forty years also joined New Jersey women in signing the letter, saying, "Without paid sick days, parents and especially mothers can't both work and parent. Without paid sick days, the health of other adults and children will always be at risk. For every reason, from simple fairness to public health and sound economic policy, New Jersey must pass this law.”

[Signed by over 80 women, the letter reads](#), “While this day marks a significant victory in the fight for women’s equality, there is still much more that needs to be done. As such, it is fitting that we, the undersigned women of New Jersey, again come together to call attention to the issue of earned sick days. We call upon all members of the New Jersey State legislature to pass this legislation and add the Garden State to the growing number of cities and states across the U.S. to provide earned sick days for workers -- a number of states and cities, most recently the states of California and Massachusetts, have already adopted earned sick days policy for their workers.”

“Every generation has made progress in the march towards equality for women. But the work is far from done, to move women closer to equality; we must support their economic security and advancement in

the workplace. Recognizing this, I was proud to support the Newark Earned Sick Days ordinance, now law. All New Jersey's women need this policy. Women and their families, especially those earning lower wages, cannot hope to succeed without this basic right," said **Mildred Crump**, Newark Council President.

"Working women can't wait for paid sick days. Juggling work and family is an enormous challenge – one that can be impossible for women in lower wage work who lack paid sick days and other family friendly policies at work. The New Jersey Legislature must recognize the challenges women today face, and move forward with this policy whose time has more than come," said **Heather Howard**, Princeton Councilwoman.

Nationally, nearly 4 in 10 working women do not have access to paid sick days, and women-dominated industries are the least likely to have paid sick leave. According to calculations by the [Rutgers Center for Women and Work](#), 53 percent of low-income women in New Jersey lack access to earned sick days compared to 32 percent of low-income men. Low-income women are disproportionately more likely to be single parents and the sole breadwinners for their households. Earned sick days would help them support their families economically while still being able to provide care.

"On August 26, 1920 women were guaranteed the right to vote, and that same year our organization, the League of Women Voters, was formed to guarantee that women always had a strong voice in public policy and that the remaining barriers that held us back from full equality were demolished," said **Nancy Hedinger**, President of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey. "Today, 95 years later, many New Jersey women are still without access to earned sick leave and often must face a difficult choice of caring for themselves and their families or putting food on their tables. Full equality is impossible without economic equality; the time to pass earned sick day legislation is now."

Current Earned Sick and Safe Days legislation, **A2354** will guarantee earned sick leave to nearly *all* workers in New Jersey. The bills would provide the estimated 1.2 million NJ workers who currently lack earned sick days:

- The ability to earn up to 9 sick days a year (up to 5 if they work at a business of 10 or less employees), at an accrual rate of 1 hour for every 30 worked.
- The right to use earned sick time to care for themselves or a family member when they are sick, a victim of sexual assault or domestic abuse.
- To take paid sick days to care for the following family members; sibling, grandparents and grandchildren, children, parents, civil unions and domestic partners and the option to designate a close friend as the person they may care for with their earned sick time.

"Two thirds of women are either the sole or equal breadwinner in their family, and here in New Jersey too many are regularly forced to choose between their paycheck and taking care of a sick child or family member," said **Analilia Mejia**, executive director of New Jersey Working Families. "Our families and needs have changed, and it's time for the New Jersey Legislature to bring our workplaces into the 21st Century by passing earned sick days."