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Historic Change for New Jersey Workplaces as Governor Phil Murphy Enacts the Earned Sick and Safe Days Act

Trenton – Members of the New Jersey Time to Care Coalition joined Governor Phil Murphy today as he signed the New Jersey Earned Sick and Safe Days Act (A1827/S2171) into law. The Coalition celebrated the landmark law that enables workers statewide to prioritize their health and that of their families without risking their jobs or paychecks, protecting public health and promoting economic security throughout New Jersey.

"Until today more than one million New Jerseyans had to worry about losing a day's pay or even their job when struck by illness," said **Dena Mottola Jaborska, Associate Director of New Jersey Citizen Action**, "This law is a humane and long overdue change in New Jersey workplace policy and we are so grateful for the leadership of Governor Murphy and the legislators who championed this pro-worker, pro-family, and pro-public health policy."

The Earned Sick Days Act, which will go into effect on October 30, enables workers to take time off and receive pay for at least 5 days a year, earning 1 hour of paid sick time for every 30 worked. Nearly all workers, including part-time workers, can use this time to tend to their own illness, care for a broad range of family members, seek preventative medical care, address issues related to domestic violence or sexual assault, and attend children's school meetings.

"My coworkers and I are relieved that we no longer have to be afraid or feel pressured to work when we are sick or our kids are sick," said **Reynalda Cruz from New Brunswick**, and mother of two working two part-time jobs, "My manager once threatened to cut my hours if I didn't bring my sick kid into work with me. Now we can take care of our kids at home where they can get better quicker and not risk spreading their illness to others!"

The law's enactment makes New Jersey just the tenth state and one of 42 jurisdictions in the nation to adopt an earned sick day policy. The law has the most inclusive definition of family in the country – loved ones outside of the nuclear family model will be able to provide needed care for their chosen family. The NJ Time to Care Coalition and its allies have been at the forefront of passing women and family friendly workplace policies gaining momentum across the nation.

"The grassroots movement to bring statewide earned sick days in New Jersey is unprecedented. Undeterred by an administration hostile to the proposal, New Jersey Working Families, partners and allies worked tirelessly to advocate for this common sense policy in over 13 municipalities and to build a statewide earned sick day momentum that the nation hasn't seen before. Today with Gov. Phil Murphy, New Jersey is sending an unmistakable message that we all deserve the economic freedoms to care for ourselves and loved ones," said **Analilia Mejia Director of New Jersey Working Families Alliance**.

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development will be charged with enforcement and developing a multilingual outreach program to inform employers, employees, parents, and workers about the availability of earned sick days under the law.

"A growing body of research conducted where there are already existing laws shows that earned sick days makes business and economic sense," said **Yarrow Willman-Cole of the Center for Women and Work at the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations**. "For that reason, robust implementation and strategic marketing is critical. We need to ensure that the million workers who lack any earned sick days – and the countless others previously unable to use sick time to care for family members – are aware of their newly won rights. That way Earned Sick Days Act has a real impact on New Jersey families' lives."

The New Jersey Earned Sick and Safe Days Act (A1827/S2171) At a Glance

- Workers start to earn paid sick days on the effective date of the law. Once enacted accrual begins on the first day of employment with a 120 day waiting period before being able to use it. Workers can carry-over no more than their 5 earned sick days from year to year.
- Businesses that have paid time off and/or 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 the earned sick days law, won't have to change their policies.
- Employers are not permitted to take retaliatory action or discriminate against an employee who requests or uses earned sick days. And they must provide employees with a notification of their rights under the law as well as post in the workplace.
- Covered family members include spouse, civil union partner, domestic partner, child, legal ward, sibling, parent, grandparent, grandchild and individuals whose relationship is the equivalent of family.