

11-07

STATEMENT OF POLICY Paid Sick Leave Policies

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports federal, state and local legislation that would require employers to provide paid sick leave for their employees.¹

Justification

Studies indicate that paid sick leave has positive health and economic impacts on communities.² Paid sick leave laws increase the likelihood of employees complying with public health directives to stay home when sick. In 2009, Human Impact Partners conducted a health impact assessment of the Healthy Families Act, legislation sponsored by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) that requires employers with more than 15 or more employees to provide paid sick leave. Their findings indicate that “the best available public health evidence demonstrates that ... paid sick days would reduce the spread of pandemic and seasonal flu; protect the public from diseases carried by sick workers in restaurants and nursing homes; and enable workers to stay home when they are sick or need to care for a sick dependent.”³ Paid sick time reduces the likelihood that a person will end up using a costly emergency room visit by allowing employees to take time off from work for preventative care.⁴ In addition, the Healthy Families Act allows individuals to use paid sick time to access medical and other support services after a sexual assault or due to domestic violence.

In cities where mandatory paid sick leave is already law, including Washington, DC, and San Francisco, employers report substantial benefits from paid sick leave including workforce stability, lower turn-over, lower healthcare costs, increased productivity, and disease prevention.⁵ It is estimated that turnover costs range from 25 to 200 percent of annual compensation for an employee.⁶

Despite the positive benefits of paid sick time laws, approximately 44 million private sector employees lacked access to paid sick days in 2010.⁷ More than 75 percent of low-wage and part-time workers have no access to paid sick leave, meaning that time away from work can jeopardize their employment status or monthly income.⁸ These workers often interact with the public in restaurants, nursing homes, childcare facilities, and in other service occupations. In the case of a severe disease outbreak, workers without paid sick leave would not have an incentive to follow social distancing recommendations to protect the public’s health and are likely to have strong disincentives (loss of income or loss of job) to follow such recommendations. The result of failure to provide paid sick leave is that the entire public is at increased risk, while low-wage and part-time workers, given their potential risk of loss of income or employment, have an unequal burden to bear when asked to protect the public’s health.

Record of Action

*Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors
November 2011*



References

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