

For more than a decade, the coalitions in the Family Values @ Work network and our partners have created an astonishing record of wins – laws in 40 locations guaranteeing paid sick days, programs for paid family and medical leave passed in 5 states (see our Timeline of Wins for more detail).

There are many ways to measure the significance of these wins. We can start with **the numbers:** nearly 40 million people and their families will newly have access to paid time to care as a result.

We can also look at **the studies** showing an impact on a wide range of areas we value, including greater financial security, more involvement of dads, more independence for seniors, increased breastfeeding, higher rates of job retention, higher wages for women, reduced racial and gender disparities, lower infant mortality.

We can take into account **the public support** for these policies. Eighty-one percent of voters – including 94 percent Democrats, 80 percent of Independents and 65 percent of Republicans agree that workplace rules to ensure paid time to care for family members "is good for our nation."

But perhaps nothing shows the importance of the wins more than **the stories** of everyday Americans, the very people who are helping make these victories possible.

Meet a sampling of the many people whose lives have been transformed because of the work of our movement.

# THE NEED FOR PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 14 percent of the US workforce has access to paid family leave through their employers, and less than 40 percent have personal medical leave through an employer-provided temporary disability program.

Nearly one in four pregnant women who are employed return to work within two weeks, mostly because they cannot afford to go without pay.



## Paid Family and Medical Leave

## The Impact of Our Wins

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Danny Contreras, Watsonville, CA

fter a dysfunctional childhood and more than a decade in prison, Danny Contreras turned his life around. He now helps other kids avoid gangs, works as a drug and alcohol counselor at The County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency, is finishing a bachelor's degree in Psychology and planning on getting his master's in social work. He's also a devoted husband and father, one who treasures the fact that he lives in a state with paid family leave.



Danny with first son JoJo

"For years, people have thought that it's the mother's job to take care of a new baby," Danny says. "But for me, and for many other men today, it's important that the father be part of those first milestones. Birth is sacred; you should be there. It helps create a stronger bond with your kids."

#### "Birth is sacred; you should be there. It helps create a stronger bond with your kids."

When his first son, Jo-Jo, was born three years ago, Danny took the full six weeks of leave. The time became even more important two years later when baby Junior arrived after an emergency c-section. Danny described it as a difficult pregnancy; his wife had been in and out of the hospital. "She couldn't watch the kids when she was trying to heal up herself."

States with paid leave have seen an Increase in men taking time to care for a new baby. He considers the leave beneficial to himself and to his family, allowing him to take his wife to her doctor appointments and his son to his well baby visits. "I needed the time, but I also needed income to pay PG&E, the mortgage, and other bills," Danny said. He can't imagine how the family would have managed if he'd had to go back to work right away.

For Danny Contreras, paid leave is important modeling. "It's a good example for our kids to see our family functioning as a unit," he said.

But that time at home also gave Danny special time with his nine-year-old stepson. The boy was dealing with the aftermath of seeing his mother in an earlier abusive relationship. Danny was able to work closely with him during those weeks. "I couldn't have done it without that leave," he said. The child, who had been having lots of trouble in school, is now at the top of his class.

After meeting an organizer with the California Work and Family Coalition, Danny has been speaking out about paid leave, sharing his experience on the History Channel and writing to then Secretary of Labor Tom Perez, who blogged about it. "I'm all for trying to help others to know their rights and what they can do for themselves and their family and community," Danny said. "Sometimes people won't listen to someone – they say that person hasn't walked in my shoes. But a lot of people can relate to me. I've been where they're at or worse."

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Lauren Agoratus, Mercerville, NJ

he first time Lauren Agoratus needed leave was 1992, when her daughter Stephanie was born with what's known as a solitary dysplastic kidney, functioning only at 15%. Lauren had accumulated sick time and vacation over the years; she used it all.

The second time she needed leave came the following year. Lauren and her husband had tried using an in-home day care with just a few other children, but Stephanie kept getting sick;



at hospital

the doctor said she needed to build up her immune system before she could be around other children. By now, the Family and Medical Leave Act had passed, so Lauren didn't have to worry about her job – but the time was unpaid.

#### "This time I had income coming in. We didn't take years to recover. We didn't almost lose our home."

"We were extremely frugal," Lauren said, "no debts – no student loans or credit cards, no cable TV. Even so, that second leave put us \$20,000 in debt, which was a lot back in 1993. We almost lost our home." For the first time, the family took out a credit card and put their mortgage on it. "It took us several years to recoup."

When cared for by family members, patients in the hospital recover from illness and injury faster, leading to shorter hospital stays, improved health outcomes, and decreased health costs.

Lauren became an advocate for families of children with special health care needs and now works as the New Jersey Coordinator of Family Voices. She also became an advocate for paid family leave in New Jersey. "Families already have to deal

with medical expenses," she said. "Couple that with the loss of income from an unpaid leave, it's the perfect storm."

Family leave insurance went into effect in New Jersey in 2009. Two years later, Stephanie, then age 19, needed a kidney transplant. Lauren describes that leave as "a totally different ball game. This time I had income coming in. It was not at all like the first time. We didn't take years to recover. We didn't almost lose our home."

Stephanie celebrated her graduation and her prom in the hospital with both parents present. Thanks to paid leave, her father was able to take time as well as her mother. Stephanie experienced some complications that required trips to a hospital in Philadelphia. "We alternated leaves," Lauren said. "I took mine all at once when she had the transplant. He took intermittent leave so he could take her back and forth to Philly."

"It's such a different scenario. You know you're not just going to be able to take care of the person, which is huge in itself, but you also know you're going to be financially stable."

Lauren stressed how important it was that both parents could participate. "My daughter also has autism. We tag team when we talk to medical professionals – one talks to the doctor while the other is caring for her." Stephanie is now attending Mercer County Community College with the help of a nurse.

"Paid leave was a huge relief for me and for the people I work with," Lauren said. "It's such a different scenario. You know you're not just going to be able to take care of the person, which is huge in itself, but you also know you're going to be financially stable."



Megan Lomba, Providence, RI

egan Lomba comes from a family of caregivers.

Megan works at a nursing home in Providence,
Rhode Island, and moonlights as a homecare
provider. One of her sisters is a CNA and
medical technician at the same nursing home. Another sister
serves in a Home and Hospice program. Their mother,
Donna, worked for many years as a senior companion,
providing assistance to homebound elderly and chronically
ill people.



Megan and Donna

So when Donna slipped on ice and shattered her shoulder and ankle, Megan and her sisters knew just how to provide the home-based care their mother needed to heal. Fortunately, a brand new Rhode Island paid family leave program, Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI), allowed Megan to take the first four weeks after Donna's accident to provide around-the-clock care—without fear of losing her pay or her job.

#### "For me [paid leave] was like a little miracle."

"I got to use TCI when it first came out. For me it was like a little miracle."

Megan says that Donna's injuries were life-changing. "My mom has vessel problems and has diabetes, but she was living a regular life until her fall." The ankle was broken in three places, and because of Donna's chronic illness, reconstructive surgery wasn't an option. Doctors chose a second approach: pinning the bones together, leaving the joint painful and deformed.

By 2020 about 40 percent of the workforce will be caring for older parents.

"They didn't think she'd be able to walk again," Megan says. "They wanted to put her in a nursing home." Megan and her sisters were worried that busy nursing home staff wouldn't have the time to give their mother the intensive rehabilitation care she would need to relearn to walk. They decided they would collaborate on caring for Donna at Megan's home. TCI made it possible for Megan to provide the first month of constant care. After that, the sisters worked in shifts.

Ultimately, Donna's recovery took four months. The cost of months of 24-hour care in a nursing facility would have been out of Donna's reach. "After 30 days," Megan says, "she would've lost her home, everything she worked her whole life for." And if Donna had had to rely on public funding for her care? Megan knows the taxpayer got a bargain: "Think about it: You pay someone four weeks of TCI versus paying someone for four months of a nursing home."

"I thank TCI just even for the experience I got to have with my mom, being able to take time with her. I remember the hugs when I'm trying to take her out of bed. I'll just never forget it. I know I did everything I could for her."

The cost savings weren't the only payoff for Megan. "I thank TCI just even for the experience I got to have with my mom, being able to take time with her. I remember the hugs when I'm trying to take her out of bed. I'll just never forget it. I know I did everything I could for her."

In fact, having Donna recuperate at Megan's home benefited the whole family. Megan says that participating in Donna's care "showed my kids a little compassion and empathy, and how to care for another person."

With her daughters' daily help, Donna relearned to walk and regained her independence. For Donna's 70th birthday, the family threw a surprise party. But Megan says the real present that day was seeing her mom come through the door on her own two feet. "Whenever I see my mom walking, I just thank God."

Megan wants leaders across the country to know about the benefits of paid family leave programs like TCI. For anyone with doubts, says Megan, "My mom is a testimony. It works."



Mary Ignatius, San Francisco, CA

ary Ignatius is passionate about children, her own and everyone else's. As the statewide organizer of Parent Voices, a grassroots group led by parents fighting to make quality child care accessible and affordable for every family, she knows that quality care for kids includes time with their parents when they need them the most.



Mary with her sons Noah and Luca

"All you want to hear is that your baby is perfect. But there I was outside of Bi-Rite ice cream, trying to Google everything I could about clubfeet."

In 2009 Mary had her first son, Noah. "It's difficult to summarize the crazy roller coaster that is first-time parenthood," she said. "There is so much that you see on TV imagining what motherhood will be like, and then there's reality!" For Mary, the unexpected challenge was breastfeeding. But because she lives in California, the first state to pass paid family leave on top of the temporary disability insurance fund it had run for decades, Mary didn't have to worry about time to seek out resources. "I was able to go on to nurse and pump for six months," she said. Without paid family leave, she's pretty sure she would have given up.

Women who take paid leave are more likely to be employed and to earn higher wages.

Four years later, she and her spouse decided to have another child. After her 20-week appointment, the genetics counselor called to tell her the baby had a strong chance of having bilateral clubfeet. "I got the call while I was standing in line with my then three-year-old for ice cream," Mary said. "All you want to hear is that your baby is perfect. But there I was outside of Bi-Rite ice cream, trying to Google everything I could about clubfeet."

Mary spent the next five months educating herself about this condition. When Luca was born, his feet were curved in. "He looked like a little pretzel. But today I can say, it wasn't too bad. And I can say that because I had paid family leave. The program enabled me to be financially secure, which gave me the peace of mind to keep my eye on the prize and be there for my baby."

From the time he was 10 days old, Luca went in weekly to get casts from toes to thigh. After five weeks he had an outpatient ankle procedure, casts for three more weeks, and eventually was fitted for braces which he still wears at night. The most difficult and challenging period of his treatment took place from weeks 2 to 10. "These were the weeks I utilized paid family leave," Mary said. "I didn't have to worry about anything but him. I could just focus on being his mom, getting the treatment he needed."

"Whether you have an infant with special needs, a perfectly healthy newborn, you want to bond with an adoptive child, or you need to care for a sick relative, paid family leave affords us the right to care for our family members in their most vulnerable time."

Mary was able to combine the wage replacement she got through the paid leave program with vacation and sick time she had accrued. She realizes that many of the low-income parents in her program do not have this cushion – that's why she's been working with the California Work and Family Coalition to raise the percentage of wage replacement available for the lowest earners. That rate will now go up to 70 percent. Mary also fights to expand job protection for leave-takers in California, and for paid leave nationwide.

"When I think about the mothers in Texas, Iowa, Florida, and all the other places where paid leave doesn't exist, my heart breaks. If I had to go back to work at the six-week mark, I would have crumbled,I would have been a walking disaster both at home and at work. Whether you have an infant with special needs, a perfectly healthy newborn, you want to bond with an adoptive child, or you need to care for a sick relative, paid family leave affords us the right to care for our family members in their most vulnerable time."



Al-nisa Smith, Newark, NJ

I-nisa Smith works for an educational services agency in Essex County, New Jersey, that places paraprofessionals in public schools on a per diem basis. Her husband, Gabriel, is a hospital security guard. Neither of those jobs offer paid family leave. Recovering from a c-section, bonding with her infant daughter and dealing with her 5-year-old son, who has autism, would have been incredibly hard if they'd had to rely on their employers.



CAl-nisa and family

#### "The difference between a calm spirit and stress means everything with a child with autism."

"I can't see how I would have done it," Al-nisa says.

But because the couple live in New Jersey, which has a statewide program that provides both temporary disability insurance (TDI) and paid family leave insurance (FLI), Al-nisa and her husband were able to spend weeks bonding with their daughter after her birth in March 2016 – 14 weeks for Al-nisa (a combination of the two programs), 6 weeks for Gabriel.

A Rhode Island study showed that paid maternity leave through the Temporary Disability Insurance program reduces the share of low birth weight births and the likelihood of early term birth.

"I was confined to bed, plus I had emotional things trying to get back to being me," said Al-nisa. "Having him there making sure we got through every day without any real issues, was awesome. He had the opportunity to bond with the baby as well."

When their son was born five years earlier, Al-nisa and Gabriel didn't know about the state's FLI program. She took

the minimum 8 weeks to recover from her c-section and went straight back to work. Gabriel had barely any time at all. "It was kind of heartbreaking," Al-nisa said. The two worked opposite shifts to care for the baby. Al-nisa tried to pump at work so she could continue breastfeeding but found it almost impossible to keep up her milk supply. "In 4 months, Chase was on Similac," she said. "I lost that bond you get with breastfeeding."

Now baby Gabby is 7 months old and breastfeeding is still going strong. Al-nisa cherishes the strong bond that has brought them. She also loves listening to her husband and baby in the background "totally enjoying each other," babbling or napping together. "It's very peaceful, not stressful. We're able to go through bonding without needing to run out to work."

# "We were able to understand what his needs were. I can't imagine that would have been possible if I hadn't had that time and my husband there as well."

And the three of them aren't the only ones benefiting. Al-nisa says Chase has really blossomed from having his mother home with him over the summer and his father able to ease the transition to this new creature in his life. "His bond with her makes my heart break," Al-nisa explained. "I've seen him grow up since she got here. He's talking to her, putting on a show for her – social skills that were kind of lacking, he has more now. We even see the difference in his classroom." She described how protective her son is of the baby. And even though he likes to hold on to his things, "every once in a while he'll give her something, let her drool on his toys."

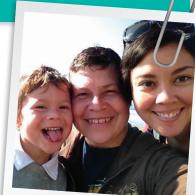
Al-nisa reflects on how different the situation would have been if she and her husband hadn't had that time after the baby's birth. "I think it would have been more stressful for Chase because it would have been a lot more stressful for me," she explains. "The difference between a calm spirit and stress means everything with a child with autism." Al-nisa was able to take the time to explain concepts like breastfeeding to her son.

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Dana Ginn Paredes, Oakland, CA

ana Ginn Paredes first met Lillian Ortiz during a union drive in 1999. Lillian was a server at a Japanese restaurant that Dana was helping to unionize. They didn't start dating until later that year, but Dana says they soon knew they would be life partners. At first they didn't think about establishing a legal relationship. But when the California Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality in 2008, the two decided, "We should do this. The more people get married during this time, the harder it will be to turn it back." They had a simple ceremony at their house with a few friends. And they started talking about having a baby.



Dana, Liilian & Emiliana

#### "It still feels like the most wonderful time of our lives."

Prop 8 passed in November 2008 and left the legality of their marriage in doubt, but not their determination to have a child. Lillian eventually became pregnant and their son, Emiliano Paredes-Ortiz, was born in June of 2010.

Fortunately, Dana worked for a non-profit called Forward Together dedicated to social change. The organization made sure staff knew how to access the state paid leave fund, but also ensured they could accrue other paid time and take that as well. Dana asked for and got three months leave, even though another director was pregnant and the group's leader was about to go on sabbatical.

Access to paid leave reduces infant mortality, increases breastfeeding duration, and increases the likelihood of newborns receiving recommended well-baby visits.

Dana and Lillian, who were both in their late 30s, felt like they'd been on "a long journey of trial and error. We wanted to be present for every second of those first months. Whether people are queer or single or a couple or heterosexual, everyone says the same thing, it goes by so quickly. There's so much to take in and enjoy together.

What a relief to know we didn't have to worry about making ends meet during those first months. It still feels like the most wonderful time of our lives."

Dana was born in Tucson. Like most states, Arizona has no paid family leave program. Had she still lived there, Dana said, she can't imagine how she would have managed. When the possibility of paid time doesn't exist in a state, there is a greater chance employers won't provide that leave either. Dana describes her family as "some of hardest working people I know, and they deserve paid time to be with their families. It shouldn't matter where we live."

#### "If I hadn't had the time to care for [my partner,] I don't know what we would have done,"

In addition to bonding with the baby, Dana's leave became crucial for caring for her partner. Lillian had a long labor and ended up having to have a c-section. After a while the incision became seriously infected. Treatment required manual cleaning every two hours for a couple of weeks. "If I hadn't had the time to do that, I don't know what we would have done," Dana said. "Lillian couldn't have done it herself. There are no painkillers for this and it's very painful."

Dana expressed her sorrow for people who don't have access to this kind of leave. "Our assumption was that if we invest in that relationship now, that foundation will help him when he grows to be an adult. He'll have a deeper root in knowing he has family he can call on for help, a deeper root in how to care for others because he's been so well cared for." The couple made a decision that Lillian, who is bilingual, would be a full-time parent for the first few years. "But the foundation started with our family leave."

# THE NEED FOR PAID SICK DAYS

Forty million workers still lack access to even one paid sick day.

That includes three-quarters of workers in accommodations and food service.



## Paid Sick Days

## The Impact of Our Wins

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Erin Schmitz, Portland, OR

rin Schmitz in Portland, Oregon, is the person who turns a beautiful wedding gown into one that actually fits.

Brides-to-be admired her expertise, but likely had no idea it brought Erin low wages and only part-time hours; she held a second job at another shop. Erin figures most of her customers were unaware how many times she had to work in terrible pain.



Erin Schmitz

# "I had a moment of panic. But then I realized, We'd won paid sick days. I could lay down and rest."

"I was diagnosed with endometriosis in 2005," Erin explains. "I hadn't had health insurance since 2008. Only full-time employees had benefits. There was a long period of time where I was always sick and there was nothing I could do about it because I had to go to work because I had to pay my bills."

A single parent with two children earning \$10 per hour and working full time would slip below the federal poverty line if he or she had to miss a single day of work in a month. Erin is proud of her skill. But because the pay was low, she describes her work as "busting my butt to make money to save up in case I needed to go to the hospital or be out for a while." If she'd had proper health insurance, Erin could have gotten medication that would have helped enormously. But no insurance, no meds.

"I would wake up in the middle of the night and just be in screaming pain," she says. "It's the cyst exploding, the fluid hitting my insides. The pain was excruciating." Once that happens, there's nothing Erin could do. Nothing, that is, until the campaign in Portland for paid sick days. She describes one incident that brought home to her what winning meant. She'd awakened with the pain she knew all too well. "It's like waking up from a really bad dream but you're still in the dream because you're in pain. I was not clear-headed. If I'd had medicine, I would have taken it, but I couldn't afford it. I couldn't stand up, and I had a moment of panic, thinking, 'What am I going to do?' But then I realized, I don't have to go to work. We'd won paid sick days. I could lay down and rest. That alone made me feel better."

"When sick days passed, it was like a sunny day, ... I wasn't even sick. And then I did get sick, and I could just stay in bed. It took so much stress off me, I was able to get better faster."

The stress associated with her illness, Erin has learned, compounds the pain. "You don't think of stress as an actual physical ailment, but it is," she says. "Knowing I could just lay there took the stress away. It allowed me to focus on myself and getting better rather than focus on the minimum wage I wasn't making. That's not much, but 8 hours of no pay makes a big difference."

For Erin, the security of paid sick days was "like a comforting hug. I knew I could get sick and I would be okay. I wasn't going to be screwed in 7 or 14 days when I got my paycheck."

A friend was active in Family Forward Oregon, which led the paid sick days campaign in Portland and later in Eugene and then the entire state. "When sick days passed, it was like a sunny day," Erin says. "I wasn't even sick. And then I did get sick, and I could just stay in bed. It took so much stress off me, I was able to get better faster."

After that incident, a co-worker didn't feel well and Erin told her to go home. "She said, 'I can't.' And I told her, 'Yes, that's why we have paid sick days." She was shocked. She thought it didn't apply to us because we were part time. But we were covered. We were going to be all right."



Maleni Mendoza Garcia, St. Paul, MN

s a recent college graduate with a degree in criminal justice and criminology, Maleni Mendoza Garcia combined her job search with the fight for paid sick days. She became involved with a community group called Take Action MN, and as a result, she's been part of successful campaigns in both Minneapolis and St. Paul. Maleni cherishes what these wins will mean for herself, her mother, and these two large communities.



#### "I had to ask, should I pay for a meal or for tuition?"

"While I was in school my health started to deteriorate. I had to ask, should I pay for a meal or for tuition?" Maleni said. Often she had no choice but to pay tuition and find food that was unhealthy or skip meals. Later that year she knew something serious was happening. A hospital visit revealed she was experiencing gall bladder attacks. Because her jobs were part-time positions, she didn't have paid sick days. She started accumulating a lot of debt.

In Maleni's last semester of college, her mother, a janitor in Minneapolis, wound up in the ER and needed surgery. Like Maleni, her mother had no paid sick days.

The percentage of workers with paid sick days has grown from 61% to 64%. The increase was driven almost entirely by increased access in low-wage jobs.

"The illness took a toll on us financially and emotionally," Maleni said. "It was my last semester of college and I had to think about what was going on at home. That's why I got involved with the paid sick days campaign. I thought, how can I contribute so people can take care of themselves without being too stressed out and worrying about retaliation from an employer?"

Maleni is delighted about the wins and the fact that the new laws will cover part-time employees. "This will definitely change a lot of the circumstances people are dealing with," she said. "Often people have to put their health to the side and not focus on what's going on in the moment, and that leads to long-term issues. That's what happened to me. I'm still recovering today."

For Maleni, paid sick days means that more students will be healthy, not have to drop out of school and be able to graduate on time. People talk about the importance of education, without realizing the impact of lacking affordable time to get well. And for low-wage workers like her mother, paid sick days can be the key to keeping a job and staying afloat.

Says Maleni, "Paid sick days will ensure that families can care for each other without debt and stress."

"Often people have to put their health to the side and not focus on what's going on in the moment, and that leads to long-term issues. That's what happened to me. I'm still recovering today."



Molly Moon Neitzel, Seattle, WA

olly Moon Neitzel owns Molly Moon's Homemade Ice Cream in Seattle, WA. Molly Moon's has eight locations and employs 75 team members in the winter months, and as many as 200 in the summer.

Before she opened, Molly wrote a business plan. She wanted to start a small business only if she could live her values, including buying local and paying 100% of health care. Molly found that



Molly and her dog Parker

she could do that and be profitable as well. Soon she joined a group of other small business owners called Main Street Alliance. When they began to talk about a citywide paid sick days policy, Molly realized she had no plan in place. She got involved and gave her input on what she thought the law should include. And she decided to implement a policy at her shops before the new law was even in place.

#### The amount of goodwill it brought me far outweighed the pennies that it cost."

At first she had some concerns, given that many of her employees are young. Would they stay out late partying and then call in sick? But she took the plunge.

"Right away I saw how much my employees appreciated the policy and I realized this was something I had overlooked in my business plan," Molly said. "The amount of goodwill it brought me far outweighed the pennies that it cost."

When an employer offers paid sick time to care for ill children, employees are more satisfied in their work and less likely to leave their job.

Molly says paid sick days "is working well for us. We haven't seen a negative impact on our bottom line, and we haven't experienced any abuses of the policy. People take it when they need it and don't take it when they don't.

Most of my team members have lots of unused sick time." In addition to guaranteeing it for her own employees, Molly became a champion for the bill in Seattle and then the ballot initiative that created a statewide law. She wanted this for everyone. After all, customers who lose a paycheck or a job when they're sick are less likely to come to her ice cream shop.

By setting an example for fellow business owners, I helped establish myself as a go-to source when analyzing the impact of forward-thinking policies on small businesses."

In addition to loyalty from her own employees, Molly's workplace policy brought other unexpected returns. "We have received tons of positive feedback from our customers who know we were some of the first to put these employee-first policies in place," Molly said. "By setting an example for fellow business owners, I helped establish myself as a go-to source when analyzing the impact of forward-thinking policies on small businesses."

Molly Moon Neitzel grew up in Boise, Idaho, and most of her family still lives there. "It's a beautiful place to grow up, and I love visiting," she said, "but lawmakers in Boise don't often put forth legislation that puts customers and employees first. If you go to a sandwich shop in Idaho, they probably don't offer paid sick days. And if the employee making the sandwich has the flu, now it's on your sandwich."

That's why Molly is speaking out about the need for the Healthy Families Act, a national standard for paid sick days that would provide necessary and equal protections to employees and consumers nationwide.



Jibril Wallace, Clinton, MD

ibril Wallace has been working at the same Safeway in Washington, DC, for 28 years, since she was a teenager helping her mother pay the bills. Now her income helps support her two kids, ages 18 and 8. Jibril has moved up from Courtesy Clerk to Food Clerk to File Maintenance Manager, overseeing pricing and tagging. And for much of that time, she had no paid sick days.



Jibril and her kids

# "It's very relieving to know if your kid or you yourself are sick, there will still be hours on your check."

"When the kids were sick, you went to work," Jibril said. "You found a relative who worked in government and had sick leave if you could. Or I'd do the overnight shift and their dad would stay with them, and I'd be there during the day."

When asked how she managed being sick herself, Jibril said, "I'm not quite sure what that is – you still had to go to work." For a long time she could get only part-time hours – and part-timers had to be out three days before being paid for any illness. "Your body is giving you a sign that you need to rest. But you'd just medicate yourself, go in and pray you'll feel better. I had to support myself."

Influenza-like infection rates decrease by about 10 percent when employees without coverage obtain access to paid or unpaid sick leave.

Jibril described the reckoning she'd go through, imagining the loss of eight hours pay. "I'd already be thinking to next Thursday, what did I have to be planning for financially." Because hours can fluctuate so much, many employees have to arrange before- and after-school care. Eight hours represents the weekly payment for that care.

But since DC's paid sick days law was expanded to include part-time workers, Jibril has a new peace of mind. "It's very relieving to know if your kid or you yourself are sick, there will still be hours on your check."

#### Everybody gets sick, or has a parent or kid who's sick. This really helps out."

As a leader in her union, UFCW Local 400, Jibril makes sure to stay informed and to keep her co-workers informed about their rights. "Management is not going to tell you," she said. "They tried to play around with it, but it got big. You'd hear it on the news." When a manager tried to deny one employee his sick time, Jibril straightened him out. "It's not coming out of your pocket," she told him. "It's the law now." Jibril is also alerting Safeway workers in Montgomery County, where a paid sick days law will soon go into effect.

Still, often workers aren't aware of their rights. Jibril described a night stocker who got an infection after having a tooth pulled. "She sent me a picture of how swollen her face was and said she'd been told not to call out." Jibril told her to take paid sick days. The woman was able to heal and come back to work.

"It's awesome to know you have that cushion," Jibril said, "especially when you're part time. Everybody gets sick, or has a parent or kid who's sick. This really helps out."



Marie Barboza, New Bedford, MA

arie Barboza works as a personal care attendant in New Bedford, Massachusetts, to support herself and her 13-year-old daughter. In all her years working in the medical field, and before that in factory jobs and grocery stores, Marie does not remember ever having paid sick days – until now.



#### "This was a paycheck. I'd earned it.

"If you had the flu, you couldn't just stay home," Marie said, even if your illness might affect your client or co-workers or customers. "If you did stay out, you had to have a doctor's note. Sometimes you weren't up to going to a doctor, especially with a flu – you already knew it's going to last 24 hours. If I could, I just went in." Marie remembers co-workers who would drag themselves to work even though they were sick. "They'd say, no one is going to pay the bills for me but myself," Marie explained. "You have to show up."

Recently Marie got much more than the flu. She went to get checked out for what she thought might be pneumonia. The doctor ordered a CAT scan and found a malignant tumor. Marie needed surgery. Then they found fluid around her heart – more surgery was needed. She wound up in the hospital for several weeks.

Workers with paid sick days are more likely to visit the doctor once a year and get key cancer screenings such as a mammogram or colonoscopy. On top of the stress of the illness, Marie had to worry about paying the rent. And then, while she was in the hospital, she remembered receiving a paper last year on earned sick time. At first, she wasn't sure if it applied. When she called for information, someone said she would receive no pay if the person is in the hospital – but it turned out that referred to the client, not the personal care attendant. Marie called again. This time she learned she could get 40 hours' pay.

"You don't know ahead of time you're going to get sick. If you're living paycheck to paycheck, it can be really hard. But this was a paycheck. I'd earned it. You don't get paid vacation, but at least you get paid sick time."

"That really came in handy," Marie said. Without that check she'd have had no money for the rent and other bills. "You don't know ahead of time you're going to get sick. If you're living paycheck to paycheck, it can be really hard. But this was a paycheck. I'd earned it. You don't get paid vacation, but at least you get paid sick time."

Marie is grateful she has family who could loan her the money until she could pay it back. But without earned sick time, she's not sure how she would have managed. "Thank God they have that now," she said.

To find sources and links for the facts quoted in this booklet, go to familyvaluesatwork.org/facts

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