

Earned Sick Days: Key Evidence

1. Earned sick days help strengthen the economy.

When working families have enough money in their pockets to cover the basics, the whole economy gains. Losing even a day's wages – or worse, a job - undermines families' ability to contribute to the economy and forces many to need public programs to keep their families afloat.

Facts:

- Nearly one quarter of adults in the US have **been fired or threatened with job loss** for taking time off to recover from illness or care for a sick loved one.
- 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.
- For a low-income family without paid sick days, going just **3.5 days** without wages is the equivalent to losing a month's groceries.
- **Economists say** job retention policies like paid sick days help reduce unemployment and strengthen the economy. Access to paid sick days **reduces the likelihood of job separation** by at least 25%.
- Economies in locations that have implemented paid sick days are doing well.
 - More than two in three businesses in San Francisco support their city's paid sick days law and **six in seven employers** report no negative impact on profitability. The city **experienced better job growth than 5 surrounding counties** without earned sick time.
 - In 2011, four years after San Francisco's sick time law was implemented, **PriceWaterhouseCoopers** ranked San Francisco as one of the top cities in the world to do business in. Even the chief lobbyist against the bill in San Francisco **told Businessweek** it's "the best public policy for the least cost. Do you want your server coughing over your food?"
 - Connecticut enacted the first statewide paid sick days law, and the Department of Labor reports that since the passage of paid sick days in 2011, employment has grown in Connecticut's [Leisure and Hospitality](#) and [Education and Health Services](#) sectors, the two most impacted by the new law.
 - A **study by Eileen Appelbaum and Ruth Milkman** showed more than three-quarters of Connecticut employers are supportive of the law. The authors found that the law had minimal effects on businesses. Businesses most frequently covered absent workers by assigning the work to other employees, a solution which has little effect on costs. Since the implementation of the paid sick days law, Connecticut employers saw decreases in the spread of illnesses and increases in morale, **among many more effects**.
 - In the **first year of implementation of New York City's** paid sick days law, the city experienced the lowest unemployment rate in 6 years and the highest labor force participation rate in its history. The city added both new businesses and new private sector jobs, including in sectors that historically did not provide paid sick days previously. Prices fell by 0.5 percent, suggesting business owners did not increase prices as a result of paid sick days.

- A **report by a small business group in Seattle** showed that King County has continued to outpace the state in job growth since the paid sick and safe leave ordinance was passed, and Seattle has maintained its share of revenues and businesses, including in the retail and restaurant sectors.
- Program administrators confirm these are not a burden on business. Donna Levitt, Division Manager, San Francisco Office of Labor Standards Enforcement, **told Connecticut legislators** in 2011, “Since [the PSLO took effect in February of 2007,] we have heard relatively few complaints... I am not aware of any employer in San Francisco who has reduced staff or made any other significant change in their business as a result of the sick leave ordinance.”
- Small business owners cite **lack of sales as the greatest obstacle to recovery**. As many employers say, “Your workers are my customers. I need them not to lose a job or paycheck when they’re sick so they can come to my shop.”
- Data analysis show that providing paid sick days under any alternative model policy increases the amount of paid time workers are able to take for medical and family needs, as intended, and that **costs to employers are reasonable**, ranging from 0.10 percent to 0.29 percent of payroll.
- Presenteeism, (the cost of employees’ lower productivity when working sick) **costs employers \$160 billion annually** – considerably more than the cost of absenteeism.
- According to one study, workers on average reported being **46 percent less effective** when they were sick at work.
- Earned sick days can reduce emergency room visits and **save \$1.1 billion a year**.
- Earned sick days can reduce inequality. **Hispanic workers** are less likely to have access to paid sick days, as are **rural workers**.

#2. Earned sick days will strengthen families.

Every family wants what’s best for their children, but without paid sick days, parents are often forced to choose between their family’s financial stability and their children’s health, and too many have no choice but to send a child to school sick or skip medical care. Paid sick days would make it easier for workers to be good employees and good parents—and will let children lead healthier lives, be more successful in school and be better prepared for the future. Seniors will also benefit when adult children can afford to take them to the doctor or care for them during an illness.

Facts:

- Parents without paid sick days, according to one survey, are **twice as likely** to send a sick child to school, and are five times as likely to take a child or family member to an emergency room because of the inability to take time off during the work day.
- When their parents are able to care for them at home, **sick children get better sooner** and reduce the risk of spreading the illness to their classmates.
- **More than one in four parents of a child with asthma (28 percent)** has missed one of their child’s medical appointments because they could not get time off work.

- People with work schedules incompatible with the care needs of family members may decrease their work hours or even **leave the labor force completely**. Paid sick days can help prevent this.

#3. Earned sick days protect public health and will make our country a safer, healthier place to live.

Nearly 80 percent of food service workers in the United States have no paid sick days. When they go to work sick, they put the public health at risk. The **Centers for Disease Control found** that more than 2.5 million cases of foodborne illness each year were caused by sick restaurant workers contaminating food while they are at work. This proposal is good for public health by keeping sick employees from spreading their illness to the public.

Facts:

- Low-wage workers, including food service, personal health care and childcare workers, **are the least likely to have paid sick days** and the **most helped by paid sick days laws**.
- Seventy-nine percent of food industry workers—who are especially likely to spread illness if they go to work sick—don't get paid sick days, according to a **Food Chain Workers Alliance study**. The Centers for Disease Control attributes **70 percent of foodborne transmission of norovirus** to infected food workers.
- **Everyone's health is at risk when people are forced to go to work sick**. During the H1N1 epidemic, 7 million people caught the virus from co-workers who came to the job while sick.
- Paid sick days can be used as an **effective policy instrument for controlling epidemics** and can **reduce influenza transmission owing to presenteeism**. Comparing the rates of influenza-like illnesses in regions with paid sick days policies and those without, researchers found **infection rates decrease by about 10 percent** when employees without coverage obtain paid sick days.
- Paid sick days reduce the risk of on-the-job injury. In fact, according to a study by the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, workers who are able to earn paid sick days are **28% less likely to get injured on the job**.
- 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.
- Workers without paid sick days are **more likely to delay medical care** when they are ill.

#4. Small businesses support earned sick days because it's good for their bottom line. The real opposition to this bill comes from lobbyists for multi-billion dollar corporations masking themselves as Mom-and-Pop shops.

Facts:

- Earned sick days result in reduced turnover, which saves businesses money. Replacing workers **typically costs from 20 to 200 percent** of a worker's annual compensation.
- Workers' access to paid sick days **reduces the probability of job separation** by at least 2.5 percentage points, or 25 percent.
- Earned sick days help to decrease the productivity lost when employees work sick.

- After **implementation of paid sick days in Connecticut**, over a quarter of employers reported improved morale, 12.5% reported increased employee motivation, 10.6% reported increased loyalty, and 14.9% reported increased productivity.
- Chambers of Commerce lobby against paid sick days. But a **leaked study** of their member businesses by LuntzGlobal shows overwhelming support for the issue.
- The \$600 billion restaurant industry and the partisan, **corporate front-group NFIB** are behind the opposition to earned sick days. The multi-million dollar chain restaurants are really driving the effort to keep their workers from receiving this modest benefit.
- A vocal spokesperson for the opposition is Michael Saltzman, who describes himself as the Research Director of the Employment Policies Institute but in fact is a PR person with no research credentials. A 2014 **front-page New York Times expose on the Employment Policies institute** raised major questions about the validity of the EPI's credibility as a research institution: "The nonprofit group is run by a public relations firm that also represents the restaurant industry, as part of a tightly coordinated effort to defeat the minimum wage increase that the White House and Democrats in Congress have pushed for." Typically the group **passes off speculation about possible future costs as actual businesses losses**.
- These groups rely on the **same arguments used to oppose every workplace reform**, from fire escapes to ending child labor, establishing the minimum wage or unpaid family leave.

#5. Paid sick days is good policy – and also good politics.

Facts:

- **Eighty-six percent of voters** – including 96 percent of Democrats, 87 percent of independents and 73 percent of Republicans – believe it is important for Congress and the President to consider new laws to keep working families economically secure, including creating a system of family and medical leave insurance and ensuring workers are able to earn paid sick days.
- **Latinos, African Americans, women and young people** — groups key to the 2012 election outcome — feel strongest about the importance of congressional and presidential action: 79 percent of Latinos, 77 percent of African Americans, 69 percent of women and 68 percent of people under 30 considered it "very important."
- How elected officials vote on these issues matters to voters:
 - **Voters in Connecticut polled after passage of the state paid sick days law** in 2011 said they felt more favorable toward their state senator (by 32 points) and their state representative (by 41 points) who supported the law.
 - Feelings for elected officials who opposed the law ran as high or higher. Voters whose state senator voted against the law said this information made them less favorable toward that state senator (32 points) or representative (41 points).
 - **In New York City, 55% of those polled (58% of women)** said the fact that City Council Speaker Christine Quinn delayed action on paid sick days for three years made them less likely to vote for her. An overwhelming majority (73%, and 78% of women) said they were more likely to vote for a candidate who supports policies like paid sick days.

- The same pattern holds true in **national polling**.