

WORKING FAMILIES STORY BANK

Family Values @ Work is a multi-state consortium of 16 state coalitions working for paid sick days, family leave insurance and other policies that value families at work.

Visit www.FamilyValuesAtWork.org for more stories.





CALIFORNIA

Donald Bentley, La Puente

“I am a civil engineer and an AFSCME member. With the help of a full-time caregiver, I also provide round-the-clock care for my brother George, who has muscular dystrophy and is a quadriplegic. I have experienced penalties and discrimination at work because of these caregiving responsibilities which make it impossible for me to accept last-minute requests to work overtime. I have testified before the California legislature about the importance of recognizing caregiving by siblings and protecting caregivers from workplace discrimination.”

COLORADO

Brian Freeman, Denver



“As an employer, I quickly realized our employees have very different needs outside of the workplace.

To create stress for an employee about having to take care of someone is not a good thing because that does not help their morale or their personal life as far as their working career. So we decided all of our employees at Grower’s Organic would receive a minimum number of paid sick days a year. We wanted to take out the concern that because they’ll miss a day of work they’ll miss some of their income. We realized that just because the income stops, doesn’t mean the bills stop coming in.”

CONNECTICUT

Paula Broderick, New Britain



“Years ago, I was working in the HR department of a Connecticut hospital and living in an abusive

relationship. Once I was able to get my daughter to a safe place I attempted to leave my abuser. He saw me packing to leave and beat and raped me and kept me captive for three days. When I escaped, I sought refuge in a local safe house, the Prudence Crandall Center. With bruises around my neck and a ruptured ear drum, I called in sick to seek medical care and a restraining order. Because I didn’t have paid sick days, I lost income at a time when I desperately needed financial resources. By the end of the week, I had lost my job because of those missed days.”



GEORGIA

Rev. Harriet Bradley, Atlanta

“I have known jobs with paid sick days and without. Currently I work as a home health care worker with no paid sick days or any other benefits. This agency has never said thank you or given any recognition for doing an excellent job. I am grateful for my faith in Jesus Christ but it would be nice to not have to trust the Lord in this area and have some benefits like paid sick days.”

ILLINOIS

Tina Jackson, Chicago.



“As a home health worker, I’m always on duty. My son got sick with the flu. So for three days I was home with him with

no sick days or vacation days because that doesn’t come with the job. That was three days of pay that I lost. With everything focused on making sure we have a place to stay and that the bills are paid, that three days really hit home hard.”

MAINE

Nicole Brown, Fairfield

“As a working single-mother, I’m happy that I now work as a community organizer for a group that values economic opportunity and provides paid sick days. However, just a few years ago I worked as a waitress and relied on every tip to support my family. There were many times I would put on a smile and work hard despite pounding headaches, an upset stomach or extreme fatigue. The worst was when my son was sick, because I had no choice but to stay home and lose a full day’s pay.”

“I have been a personal care attendant, caring for people with disabilities, for over 24 years. I have never had a paid sick day. I have gone to work sick on too many occasions and, on one occasion, I even had pneumonia. I could not afford a day without pay when I live from paycheck to paycheck. I don’t think it’s fair or just that any human being should have to make a decision on health because of money. Paid sick time should be a law. Not only does it allow me to take care of myself and my family, but it is safer for my consumer.”

MASSACHUSETTS

Mary Tillman, Boston





NEW JERSEY

Jean Pierce, Woodbridge

“My youngest son was diagnosed with early stage rabdo myosarcoma. Both my husband and I worked full time. After one month of therapy, my son began suffering from the effects of chemo and required constant care. Neither my husband nor I had paid leave available and we were forced to make the difficult decision for me to leave work to provide care for my son full-time. We made many sacrifices to do so. As a concerned parent and member of Health Professionals Allied Employees Union (HPAE,) I became a strong supporter of family leave insurance.”



NEW YORK

Adela Valdez, New York City

“I have worked in restaurants, as a house-cleaner, and caring for children and the elderly. Without paid sick days, not only do we lose a day’s pay, we also risk losing our jobs. For three years, I worked in a factory making expensive lamps. Even when I was sick, I had to go to work. One day, I had a fever but I went to work anyway. On the third day, I still had a fever. I felt very sick and I asked permission to go to the hospital. My supervisor responded, ‘Fine, go to the hospital, but don’t come back. I need people who come here to work, not to get sick.’ So I lost my job.”

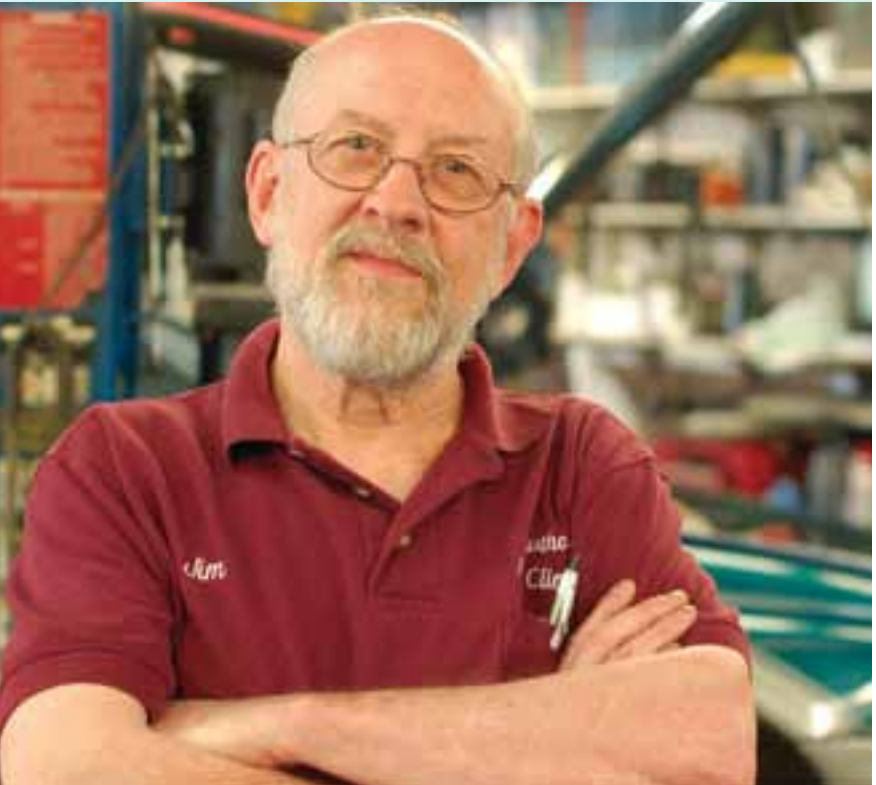
NORTH CAROLINA

Barbara Brown, Mebane



“I work as a research assistant with one of the major universities in North Carolina. I do receive paid sick leave and vacation leave.

Sick leave allows me to take off when my children are sick or have medical appointments. Just recently my son had a 24-hour stomach virus which I had to stay home for. I can actually email my office to let them know I have to be off for a sick day. I think about the many people who do not have sick leave who may have children or elderly parents that they can't attend to if they're needed during the day. Sick leave is very important for people, especially with the economic situation we're in today.”



OREGON

Jim Houser, Portland

“Just as we want to retain our best customers, we wouldn't want any of our staff to even think of taking their talents anywhere else. As a result of our wage and benefit package, including paid sick days, 8 of our 9 full-time employees have an average tenure of over 18 years with us at Hawthorne Auto Clinic. That kind of loyalty allows us to compete with larger employers. To level the playing field, we need standards, like worker's compensation insurance and paid sick days, so we can all compete fairly.”

PENNSYLVANIA

**Dewetta Logan,
West Philadelphia**

“As a small business owner, I face a number of challenges, but none affect the bottom line more than having a dedicated and loyal staff. To ensure a quality staff, I provide my seven employees at Smart Beginnings Early Learning Center with five paid sick days each year. I value my employees and in turn, they value working at Smart Beginnings. By offering paid sick days, I know that when staff are at work, they are focused 100% on the kids.”



WASHINGTON

Makini Howell, Seattle



“I’m a small business owner and I’ve grown up in a small business. My parents started our business in 1972 and they raised us as entrepreneurs. I run three restaurants in Seattle and a commercial kitchen on Capitol Hill, and we employ 30 people. All of us get sick from time to time and when my employees are sick I don’t want them to be thinking, ‘Can I really afford to take a day off or should I just go to work – I’m not going to be able to pay the rent?’ For me, the cost I can’t afford is losing good employees. Investing in employees is investing in the most valuable asset a business has. I, for one, don’t want to serve you up H1N1 with your fries. And I’m willing to spend the pennies to do that.”

“I have a child with mental illness. When he was in kindergarten and first grade, behavior issues began. I lost four positions in five years because I didn’t have paid sick leave, and the attendance rules were very strict. Whenever the school would call, I would need to be available. When there was a suspension at school, I would take the note to the supervisor so that they knew why I could not be there. If he was sick, I would take the doctor’s notes. I enjoy working and have a lot to offer. We need paid sick days.”

WISCONSIN

Torrie Moffett, Milwaukee

