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## The Earned Sick Days Act

### Paid Sick Days Benefit Families, Businesses, and Wisconsin's Economy

No one should face the impossible choice between caring for their health or keeping their paycheck or job. But more than one million private sector workers in Wisconsin – 46 percent of the workforce – must make this decision every time illness strikes because they don't have access to earned paid sick time.<sup>1</sup> More than half of parents nationwide lack even a few days of paid sick days to care for a sick child.<sup>2</sup> At a time when families' finances are stretched thin, working families need the job and economic security paid sick days provide.

### A Basic Workplace Standard

The Earned Sick Days Act (LRB 4163/1) would set a paid sick days standard for Wisconsin – a critical step toward meeting the health and financial needs of working families.

#### The Earned Sick Days Act Would:

- Allow workers to **earn up to nine job-protected earned sick days each year** to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care, or provide care to a sick family member. Workers in businesses with fewer than 10 workers would earn up to five sick days each year.
- Allow workers to use their paid sick days to recover or seek assistance for themselves or a family member related to **domestic abuse, sexual abuse, or stalking**.
- Include a **simple method for calculating accrued sick time**. Workers would earn a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked.
- **Allow employers to use their existing policies**, as long as they meet the minimums set forth in the Act for time, types of use, and method of use.

A paid sick days standard for Wisconsin would help working families meet their health and financial needs while boosting productivity and improving worker retention for businesses and strengthening our economy.

- **Paid sick days provide families with economic security.** Workers without paid sick days have to either go to work sick or stay home, lose pay, and risk job loss or workplace discipline. Nearly one-quarter of adults in the United States (23 percent) report that they have lost a job or have been threatened with job loss for taking time off due to illness or to care for a sick child or relative.<sup>3</sup> Many workers simply can't afford to jeopardize their families' economic security by staying home. Just 3.5 unpaid days off can cost a family without access to paid sick days, on average, its entire monthly grocery budget.<sup>4</sup>
- **Providing paid sick days is cost effective.** Working people with paid sick days are more productive and less likely to leave their jobs, which saves businesses money by reducing turnover. And

“presenteeism” – when employees work sick – is estimated to cost our national economy \$160 billion in lost productivity each year.<sup>5</sup>

- **Paid sick days reduce community contagion.** Workers without paid sick days are more likely to report going to work with a contagious illness like the flu or a viral infection — and risk infecting others.<sup>6</sup> Workers in restaurants and industries that require frequent contact with the public are among the least likely to have paid sick days. For example, nearly three in four food service workers and workers in child care centers and nursing homes don’t have paid sick days.<sup>7</sup> This poses a serious threat to public health.
- **Paid sick days can decrease health care costs.** If all workers had paid sick days, it is estimated that 1.3 million emergency room visits could be prevented each year in the United States, saving \$1.1 billion in health care costs annually. More than half of these savings – \$517 million – would go to taxpayer-funded health insurance programs such as Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program.<sup>8</sup>
- **Paid sick days policies are working well elsewhere and momentum is growing.** Evidence from Connecticut,<sup>9</sup> San Francisco,<sup>10</sup> Washington, D.C.,<sup>11</sup> and Seattle<sup>12</sup> shows that paid sick days laws help workers and families without harming business or job growth. Portland (Ore.), New York City, Jersey City, and Newark (N.J.) implemented or will implement their own paid sick days laws in 2014.

## Working Families Need Paid Sick Days

**Paid sick days policies have been enacted successfully at the state and local levels.** Wisconsin’s working families should have the right to take a day away from work to get the medical care they need, to care for a feverish child or to assist a parent with a broken hip. Wisconsin’s Earned Sick Days Act would establish a much-needed statewide standard.

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