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With Voter Support for Work-Family Solutions at All Time High,

Chicagoans Call for Paid Sick Days

Coalition Joins Chicago Aldermen to Support Legislation to Boost the Economy, Protect Public Health and Strengthen Financial Security for Working Families

CHICAGO – In a strong show of support, small business owners, workers, health care practitioners, parents and Chicago Aldermen rallied today at City Council for paid sick days legislation. The group, organized by the [Earned Sick Time Chicago Coalition](#), is calling on City Council to pass an earned sick time ordinance that would guarantee that the nearly half million Chicago workers who do not have access to paid sick days are able to take time off when they or their families are ill. A recent survey found that 82% of Chicago voters support paid sick days legislation.

“In this economy, it’s more important than ever that people can afford to stay home when they or loved ones are sick, without fear of falling behind on bills or losing their job,” said Alderman Moreno, co-sponsor of the Chicago Earned Sick Time Ordinance. “No working person in Chicago should be forced to choose between their family’s economic security and their family’s health.”

The legislation would enable workers to earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to between 5 and 9 days a year depending on employer size. It would allow workers to earn time off to care for their own illness, an ill family member, or to attend medical appointments. It would also allow leave to handle domestic or sexual violence, and if an employee’s place of business is closed or the school of an employee’s child has been closed due to a public health emergency.

Currently, 42% of private sector workers in Chicago do not have access to a single paid sick day, meaning that more than 460,000 Chicago workers can be fired for missing work if they are sick or to care for their sick child or elderly parent. Nationally, nearly [one quarter of adults](#) have been fired or threatened with job loss for taking time off to recover from illness or care for a sick loved one. For low-income workers, for whom the absence of the policy is most costly, almost 80% lack paid sick days.

Deli worker Carlos Romero was sick with the flu and did not have paid sick time. “Though I would not get paid I called my manager and said I would not be able to come into work,” he said. “I was told I would be fired if I did not show for work, so I went to work sick and put the customers and co workers at risk. Days later, a co-worker did catch the flu. Paid sick time is an important policy that allows low-wage workers like myself to be healthy and not contaminate the public.”

The number of intensive care unit flu cases in Chicago hit an all-time high the week of January 11 compared to any week last year, according to the Chicago Department of Health.

Numerous studies and practical experiences with earned sick days show a positive impact on businesses and the economy, and economists say job retention policies like earned sick days help reduce unemployment and strengthen the economy.

In a cost-benefit analysis for the proposed ordinance, the cost to employers for providing earned sick time will be outweighed by the benefits for a [savings of over \\$6 million](#) due to reduced turnover, reduced flu contagion, and increased productivity.

San Francisco, which has had a law in place for six years, was rated by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2012 as one of the top cities in the world to do business, and more than two in three [San Francisco businesses](#) now support the local law; six in seven report no negative impact on profitability.

"When one of my employees is sick, I want them to stay home to get better," said Teresa Ging owner of Sugar Bliss Cake Boutique. "Since they are offered paid sick time, my employees stick with me for years and that helps my business run smoothly and boosts the bottom line, as training new employees takes time and is expensive."

Moreover, paid sick days can reduce emergency room visits and [save \\$12 million a year](#) in Chicago. When food service workers go to work sick, they put the public health at risk; the Center for Disease Control has found that more than [2.5 million cases of foodborne illness](#) each year are caused by sick restaurant workers contaminating food while they are at work.

With support across party lines – polls consistently show that [over 80% of voters](#), including Democrats, Independents and Republicans alike, support paid sick days – and local and national leaders, including President Obama, committing to "redouble our efforts on behalf of fairer workplaces and healthier, more secure families," momentum for paid sick days legislation is growing across the country.

Across the country, cities have been adopting paid sick days policies to help improve public health and bolster the economic recovery. Recently, a [report from Seattle](#) by Main Street Alliance of Washington found that one year after Seattle's implementation of earned sick days, the legislation has had no negative impact on business. Today's rally comes a month after Newark, New Jersey unanimously passed similar legislation. Months earlier, Jersey City passed the first earned sick days law in New Jersey. Washington, D.C. recently expanded their existing paid sick days law to cover all workers, and recently elected New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio led the effort to strengthen his city's law. In total, seven cities have taken action to help boost the economy by making sure workers can hang on to critical income when ill.

"Chicago families can't afford to wait any longer," said Melissa Josephs, director of Equal Opportunity Policy at Women Employed. "We hope this year that Chicago can build off the unprecedented national momentum, giving workers and families much-needed relief and making our city a healthier, more business-friendly place for it."

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The Earned Sick Time Chicago Coalition includes: Action Now, Arise Chicago, Between Friends, Chicago Foundation for Women, EverThrive Illinois, Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, Jobs with Justice, Mujeres Latinas en Accion, National Employment Lawyers Association – IL, Planned Parenthood of Illinois, Rape Victim Advocates, Restaurant Opportunities Center – Chicago, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, OUR Walmart, Women Employed, YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago
AFSCME Council 31, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 308, Illinois Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 21, Illinois Education Association Region 67, Illinois Federation of Teachers, National Nurses United, SEIU Healthcare IL and Indiana, SEIU Local 73, Teamsters 743, Teamsters 777, United Auto Workers Region 4, United Auto Workers Local 2320, United Steel Workers District 7, UFCW Local 881, UFCW Local 1546, Unite-Here Local 1, Workers Organizing Committee of Chicago/Fight for Fifteen, Workers United