



Cosponsor the Healthy Families Act

May 15, 2009

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 100,000 bipartisan members of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I write to **urge you to become an original cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act**. The bill will be introduced next week by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). Introduction of the Healthy Families Act is particularly timely on the heels of calls from the Centers for Disease Control and health officials for workers presenting flu-like symptoms to stay home. For the 43 percent of private sector workers¹ and over 22 million working women² without sick-days, this is unaffordable and unrealistic.

The Healthy Families Act would require employers with at least 15 or more employees to guarantee workers seven days of accrued paid sick leave annually. By ensuring that hard working Americans have access to a minimum number of paid sick days that can also be used to care for sick dependents, working parents will no longer have to make the difficult choices between caring for loved ones – or themselves – and losing much-needed income. In these challenging economic times, that decision is an especially difficult one for families to make. Fortunately, as the San Francisco law shows us, paid sick days do not pose a similar economic burden on employers.³

At least 145 countries worldwide provide paid sick days, with 127 providing a week or more annually.⁴ But many hardworking Americans do not have access to the important benefit of paid sick leave. In fact, just under half of the private sector workforce has no paid sick days.⁵ Low-wage workers are especially hard hit, with about half receiving no paid sick days.⁶ Further, 27 percent of low income women put off getting health care because they cannot take time off from work and 18 percent of women at all income levels face this situation.⁷ More than 22 million working women do not have paid sick days,⁸ and as a result half of working mothers report that they must miss work and often go without pay when caring for a sick child.⁹ Lastly, with more than a third of Americans already experiencing significant elder care responsibilities,¹⁰ coupled with the aging of the baby boomers, the problem is likely to worsen in the years ahead.

In the 111th Congress, the Healthy Families Act will be introduced with a new provision. The seven paid sick days that workers accrue over the course of the year are available for use for treatment, recovery, and actions necessary to deal with an incidence of domestic violence. This includes, but is not limited to, activities such as filing a restraining order, making a court appearance, moving into a shelter, and seeking medical treatment. We know that the aftermath of domestic violence costs employers, at a minimum, between \$3 billion and \$5 billion annually in lost time and productivity.¹¹ And even more importantly, victims of intimate partner violence lose 8 million days of paid work each year.¹² Paid sick and safe days are a necessity to victims.

The need for such legislation is clear. AAUW believes that offering workers the option of taking time off when they or a family member are sick is not just good for families, it's good for business and it's vital for public health. Again, I urge you to **become an original cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act** by contacting Leticia Mederos in Rep. DeLauro's office (202-225-3661 or Leticia.Mederos@mail.house.gov). If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-785-7720 or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager, at 202-785-7730.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lisa M. Maatz".

Lisa M. Maatz
Director of Public Policy and Government Relations

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- ¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (August 2007). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in Private Industry in the United States, March 2007*, Table 19. Retrieved January 16, 2008, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/sp/ebsm0006.pdf>.
- ² Institute for Women's Policy Research. (February 2007). *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254_paid sickdaysFS.pdf.
- ³ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (October 2008). Job Growth Strong with Paid Sick Days. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from www.iwpr.org/pdf/B264_JobGrowth.pdf.
- ⁴ The Institute for Health and Social Policy. (2007). *The Work, Family, and Equity Index: How Does the United States Measure Up?* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/ihsp/WFEIFinal2007.pdf>.
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (August 2007). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in Private Industry in the United States, March 2007*, Table 19. Retrieved January 16, 2008, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/sp/ebsm0006.pdf>.
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (August 2007). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in Private Industry in the United States, March 2007*, Table 19. Retrieved January 16, 2008, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/sp/ebsm0006.pdf>.
- ⁷ Salganicoff, Alina, Usha R. Ranji, and Roberta Wyn. (2005) *Women and Health Care: A National Profile*. Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/7336.cfm>.
- ⁸ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (February 2007). *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254_paid sickdaysFS.pdf.
- ⁹ Kaiser Family Foundation. (April 2003). *Women, Work and Family Health: A Balancing Act*. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=14293>.
- ¹⁰ National Partnership for Women and Families. (June 2004). *Get Well Soon: Americans Can't Afford to Be Sick*. Accessed January 24, 2008 from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/GetWellSoonReport.pdf?docID=342>.
- ¹¹ Bureau of Nat'l Aff., Special Rep. No. 32, *Violence and Stress: The Work/Family Connection 2* (1990).
- ¹² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States* (2003).