



Cities and States Are Leading on Earned Sick Days



U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez and White House senior advisor Valerie Jarrett are traveling the country to highlight how states, localities and businesses are taking the lead on leave. Above, Secretary Perez meets with Anne Quirk, Griffin Quirk, and 10 month old Kiernan Quirk. The Quirk family was able to use paid leave to take care of their son Kiernan when he was sick

A strong earned sick days policy is a sign of a healthy city. Earned sick day laws can help working families take time off when necessary to face health needs without putting their economic security at risk. Offering these guarantees is also an important public health consideration, as the availability of earned sick days can help prevent the spread of contagious illnesses to coworkers and customers, and curb unnecessary emergency room visits by allowing workers to seek medical attention during regular business hours; moreover, sick workers can recover faster when they can get the care and rest they need. Earned sick days also ensure that parents can care for their sick children, which helps children recover faster. Lastly, earned sick days help businesses attract and retain a talented workforce, boosting a city or a State's economy. In short, a healthy workforce is a more productive and happier workforce.

Cities and States Are at the Forefront of Earned Sick Days Momentum:

In 2014, cities across the country, including Paterson, Passaic, East Orange, Jersey City, Trenton, Irvington and Montclair, New Jersey; Eugene, Oregon; and Oakland, California, enacted earned sick days ordinances, while New York City and Washington, D.C., expanded eligibility for these benefits. They joined cities like Newark, New Jersey; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington, as well as the State of Connecticut, in guaranteeing earned sick days. California passed a statewide earned sick days law in 2014, and Massachusetts passed an earned sick days ballot initiative with nearly 60 percent of the vote in the midterm elections.

The Need for Earned Sick Days:

Only 61 percent of U.S. private sector workers have access to paid sick days through their employer.

“For the good of our families and the strength of our economy, we need to lead on leave.”

— U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez

The Benefits of Earned Sick Days:

- Earned sick days lead to positive outcomes for the health of workers. Workers who had access to earned sick days were 28 percent less likely to be injured on the job.
- Earned sick days provide important public health benefits. Workers in service industries who cannot take sick days may transmit illness to their customers and coworkers. One study concluded that if workers had access to earned sick days, the spread of the H1N1 outbreak in 2009 could have been reduced by an estimated five million cases.
- Earned sick days improve children's health. Parents who do not have access to earned sick days may be forced to miss their children's medical appointments, leave sick children at home alone and fail to provide them with check-ups and preventative care.

The Obama Administration Supports Cities and States That Support Earned Sick Days:

The Administration is committed to expanding access to paid leave by supporting cities and states seeking to enact paid leave policies. In his 2015 State of the Union address, President Obama called on Congress, as well as States and cities, to pass legislation that would allow millions of working Americans to earn up to seven paid sick days per year. The President has also modernized the federal workplace through a Presidential Memorandum directing agencies to advance up to six weeks of paid sick days for parents with a new child.

“My mother has had breast cancer for the last six years. She lives with me and is 89 years old in her final stages of life. The cancer has metastasized to many parts of her body. It breaks my heart to watch this disease slowly take her life away day by day and not be able to stay home to care and spend quality time with her before the end.”

— Nancy, Chicago, on what paid sick leave would mean to her family.

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“We are on the cusp of huge breakthroughs on paid leave and paid sick days. I believe that in 30 years, we will look back at this as the moment we began to turn the corner, when a sleeper issue finally began to awaken and when grass-roots momentum began to gather steam and roll toward a broad national consensus.”

— U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez