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NEW YORKERS RALLY FOR PAID SICK DAYS

Expanded Coalition Calls on City Council to Pass Bill to Protect Public Health, Provide Relief for Families in Tough Economy

New Amendments Protect Flexibility for Business Owners

CITY HALL – In a strong show of support, small business owners and labor unions; doctors and health care practitioners; economists and workers; parents and New York City Council Members rallied for paid sick days on the steps of city hall this afternoon. The group, organized by the New York Paid Leave Coalition, is calling on City Council to pass the Paid Sick Time bill (Int 0097-2012), which would ensure that 1.5 million New Yorkers without access to paid sick days are able to take time off when they or their families are ill. At the rally, the coalition introduced a dozen amendments to better protect small businesses and provide flexibility for business owners.

“Making sure that people can afford to stay home when they or a loved one are sick is critical to keeping our city healthy,” said Council Member Gale A. Brewer, sponsor of the Paid Sick Time Act. “The health of all New Yorkers is at risk when workers with contagious illnesses ride the subway, prepare and serve food, and take care of children and seniors. Lack of paid sick time can also contribute to the worsening of chronic diseases like asthma and diabetes – which have reached epidemic levels in some of our neighborhoods – as New Yorkers without time off may be unable to seek early intervention for themselves and their children when complications arise.”

“Paid sick time is a small measure that can have an immediate, positive impact on business productivity, reduce unemployment, and strengthen financial security for families who desperately need relief,” said Council Member Julissa Ferreras. “In this difficult economy, we need creative solutions to help improve the economic conditions for all New Yorkers.”

Council Members Gale A. Brewer and Julissa Ferreras co-hosted the rally, which many of the 35 bill co-sponsors attended. Labor leaders, including 1199 President George Gresham and Central Labor Council President Vinny Alvarez, as well as a large crowd of union members and working New Yorkers took part in the rally. Leaders of the Working Families Party, NYCLU, Make the Road NY, SEIU Healthcare, Community Service Society, A Better Balance and dozens of other coalition supporters also spoke in support of the measure.

“Without paid sick days, hardworking New Yorkers are forced to go into work sick rather than risk losing the job or wages their families depend on,” said Vinny Alvarez, President of the New York City Central Labor Council (NYCCLC). The NYCCLC, which represents 1.3 million unionized workers citywide, passed a resolution in support of paid sick days last year. “That puts strain on families living paycheck to paycheck and puts everyone’s health at risk.”

Informed by meetings with small business owners and Council Members from across the five boroughs, the coalition proposed twelve amendments to the bill at the rally. These amendments would ensure competitiveness of small

businesses, provide flexibility for business owners and minimize administrative requirements. Some of the amendments include providing a one-year grace period for new businesses, excluding “mom and pop” shops from paid sick time while ensuring job protection for their employees, reducing bookkeeping requirements and creating on-line resources for business owners.

“I had some reservations about paid sick time before, but the amendments to the bill address the needs of small businesses,” said Fausto Rodriguez, who owns two Medical Clinics in Queens and employs eight people. “This paid sick time bill gives business owners the flexibility we need. It also protects the public's health and safety, as well as that of our employees, and customers.”

Across the country, cities and states have been adopting paid sick days policies to help improve public health and bolster the economic recovery. In June, [Connecticut](#) passed the first statewide paid sick days law. [Seattle](#) and [Philadelphia](#) City Councils both recently passed paid sick days laws in the fall, and the Governor and Secretary of Labor in [Massachusetts](#) are supporting a bill in the state legislature.

“In this economy where too many New Yorkers are struggling to support their families, paid sick days are critical,” said Donna Dolan, chair of the New York Paid Leave Coalition, who cited [polling from Baruch College](#), which finds 89% of New Yorkers support a citywide paid sick time policy. “The growing support for paid sick days is a reflection of the economic urgency that hard-working New Yorkers are feeling every day.”

Numerous studies show the positive impact that paid sick days have on businesses and the economy. [Economists](#) say job retention policies like paid sick days help reduce unemployment and strengthen the economy. San Francisco, which has had a paid sick days law for four years, was rated by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2011 as one of the top cities in the world to do business, and more than [two in three San Francisco businesses](#) support the local law with six in seven reporting no negative impact on profitability.

"I worked the night shift at a large restaurant for eleven hours a day for six days a week. Once my child became very ill, and I asked my boss for time off to take care of her. He told me that if I took this time off, he would fire me," said Agustina Velez, an immigrant worker and a member of Make the Road New York. "Mothers should not have to make these decisions between our children's health and our jobs. We need the City Council to pass paid sick leave this year."

New York parents are also supporting the bill. More than 8,000 signatures in support of the legislation were presented to City Council at the rally. “The family budget is impossible math. Parents can’t work any harder and can’t spend any less,” explained Cari Jackson, a Kensington mom and organizer of the petition drive. “We need policies that help working families, and paid sick time is the first step to relieving the acute stress of raising a family in this economy.”

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New York City Paid Sick Days Coalition: 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, A Better Balance, AFSCME District Council 1707, Center for Children's Initiatives, Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare, Community Service Society of NY, CWA District 1, Doctors Council SEIU, Drum Major Institute, GMHC, Greater NY Labor-Religion Coalition, Institute for the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly, Korean-American Small Business Service Center, Local 1500 UFCW, Make the Road NY, MomsRising, NYC Central Labor Council, NYCLU, NY Communities for Change, NY Paid Leave Coalition, NY Society for Ethical Culture, NY Women's Chamber of Commerce, Progressive States Network, PHANYC, ROC-NY, RWDSU, SEIU 32BJ, UFT, USA Latin Chamber of Commerce, Women of Color Policy Network, Women's City Club of NY, Workers United, Working Families Party