



**Headquarters**  
5 Columbus Circle, 11<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10019  
tel: 212.430.5982

**Southern Office**  
2301 21<sup>st</sup> Ave. South, Suite 355  
Nashville, TN 37212  
tel: 615.915.2417

**DC Office**  
815 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 4162  
Washington, DC 20005

**Colorado Office**  
303 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 400  
Denver, CO 80203

[abetterbalance.org](http://abetterbalance.org) | [info@abetterbalance.org](mailto:info@abetterbalance.org)

**Oral Testimony from A Better Balance for New York City Council Committee on  
Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing Hearing on Int. No. 2448-2021  
November 16, 2021**

Thank you to the Chair and to the Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Cassandra Gomez and I am a Staff Attorney at A Better Balance. A Better Balance is a national legal advocacy organization dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace and helping employees meet the conflicting demands of work and family. Here in New York City, we helped draft the Earned Sick Time Act and negotiated the final terms of the legislation. We are thrilled that this important piece of legislation is being considered and we urge this committee to move forward with and pass Intro. 2448.

From early on in the vaccine distribution effort in the U.S., workers have been clear that access to paid time off to get vaccinated and recover from any side effects would make them more likely to get vaccinated.<sup>1</sup> This summer, workers whose employers provided paid time off to get the vaccine or recover from any side effects were 24% more likely to have received at least one dose of the vaccine than workers whose employers provided no paid vaccine leave.<sup>2</sup> And, workers with lower household incomes are less likely to receive paid leave for the COVID-19 vaccine,<sup>3</sup> which has resulted in much lower vaccination rates for low-income adults as compared to higher-income adults.<sup>4</sup>

Now that children ages 5 and up are eligible to receive the vaccine, working families in New York City will need immediate access to paid leave to help family members receive and recover from the vaccine. Our city must ensure that responsible workers do not have to lose pay in order to shield their children from the virus.

Intro. 2448 will undoubtedly serve the city well and increase the likelihood that New York families will get vaccinated. The legislation proposed today would add to the existing sick time



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law the right to take COVID-19 child vaccination time for workers to accompany children to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and recover from related side effects. Among other strengths, this COVID-19 child vaccination time is in addition to earned safe and sick time under existing law and must be paid.

As detailed in our written testimony, to make this bill even stronger, we recommend amending it to give workers access to more paid time off to care for children recovering from the COVID-19 vaccine and expanding the bill to allow workers to take time off to assist all family members, as defined in the Earned Safe and Sick Time Act, in receiving their vaccine injections and to care for family members recovering from the vaccine.

As a city that was once the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S., we must do all that we can to ensure that we never again let COVID-19 cases rise to the levels of the worst peaks of the pandemic—passing Intro. 2448 will be crucial to protecting the children of New York and stopping the spread of COVID-19. We enthusiastically urge the Council to ensure Intro. 2448’s passage.

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<sup>1</sup> *Id.*

<sup>2</sup> *Workers Are More Likely to Get a COVID-19 Vaccine When Their Employers Encourage It and Provide Paid Sick Leave, Though Most Workers Don’t Want Their Employers to Require It*, Kaiser Family Found. (June 30, 2021), <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/press-release/workers-are-more-likely-to-get-a-covid-19-vaccine-when-their-employers-encourage-it-and-provide-paid-sick-leave-though-most-workers-dont-want-their-employers-to-require-it/>.

<sup>3</sup> Liz Hamel et al., *KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor: September 2021*, Kaiser Family Found. (Sept. 28, 2021), <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/poll-finding/kff-covid-19-vaccine-monitor-september-2021/>.

<sup>4</sup> *COVID-19 Vaccination Rates: State-level and Subpopulation Evidence from the Household Pulse Survey—Update 4*, State Health Access Data Assistance Ctr. (Mar. 25, 2021), <https://www.shadac.org/news/covid-19-vaccination-rates-state-level-and-subpopulation-evidence-household-pulse-survey-0>.