



Testimony in Support of S.B. 312, An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days

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Labor and Public Employees Committee

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Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and esteemed members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

Thank you for accepting this testimony submitted on behalf of Health Equity Solutions (HES), a nonprofit organization with a statewide focus on promoting policies, programs, and practices that result in equitable health care access, delivery, and outcomes for all people in Connecticut. Our vision is for every Connecticut resident to attain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 312, An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days. **We strongly support expanding the state's paid sick days and urge you to ensure that paid sick leave reaches Connecticut's Black, Latino/a, Indigenous, and other people of color.**

Paid sick days allow people to recover from an illness or care for a sick family member and can slow the spread of disease by enabling people to stay home rather than bringing an infectious disease to work. Paid sick leave also provides economic security to workers, particularly those who care for children or other family members.¹ The U.S. is the only high income country without a national paid leave program. It is widely recognized that these programs not only help control the spread of infectious disease but also boost labor force participation and improve productivity.² Research shows that Black and Latino/a residents of the U.S. have less access to paid leave than white residents,³ making it more difficult for them to take time to recover from a medical procedure or when ill.

Connecticut's current paid sick leave law only applies to employers with 50 or more employees in certain service occupations. This leaves many Connecticut residents unable to take time off when they or a family member are ill. Further, employees only become eligible for paid sick time after working 680 hours. This excludes part-time workers and those with multiple jobs. Prior to the pandemic, more than 32 million people—4 out of 5 workers—across the United States lacked access to paid leave time.⁴

¹ Marotta, J., & Greene, S. (n.d.). Paid sick days - urban institute. Retrieved from https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99648/paid_sick_days._what_does_the_research_tell_us_about_the_effectiveness_of_local_action_0.pdf

² Romig, K., & Bryant, K. (2021, April 27). A national paid leave program would help workers, Families. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/a-national-paid-leave-program-would-help-workers-families>

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). Racial and ethnic disparities in access to and use of paid family and medical leave: Evidence from four nationally representative datasets: Monthly Labor Review. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2019/article/racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-access-to-and-use-of-paid-family-and-medical-leave.htm>

⁴ Jocelyn Frye, "On the Frontlines at Work and at Home: The Disproportionate Economic Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Women of Color" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2020), available at <https://americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/04/23/483846/frontlines-work-home/>

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Furthermore, research shows that low-wage workers and workers of color had less access to paid sick leave than higher wage workers and white workers.^{5, 6}

In 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act provided individuals with limited paid sick leave. This law was successful in lowering COVID-19 transmission rates across the United States.⁷ As the pandemic continues, we must find ways to ensure residents have access to time to get vaccinated and recover not only from COVID-19 but from other infectious diseases and necessary health care procedures. Lacking time to get vaccinated was one of the top challenges reported by individuals who had not received the COVID-19 vaccine.⁸ Paid sick leave ensures everyone can afford to receive health care and to stay home when they or a dependent are ill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding S.B. 312. We can be reached with any questions at ksiegel@hesct.org or 860.937.6437.

⁵ Hye Jin Rho, Hayley Brown, and Shawn Fremstad, "A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries" (Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2020), available at <https://cepr.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-04-Frontline-Workers.pdf>.

⁶ The Center for American Progress, *The Urgent Case for Permanent Paid Leave Lessons Learned From the COVID-19 Response*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/urgent-case-permanent-paid-leave/>

⁷ Pichler S, Wen K, Ziebarth NR. COVID-19 Emergency Sick Leave Has Helped Flatten The Curve In The United States: Study examines the impact of emergency sick leave on the spread of COVID-19. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00863>

⁸ Surgo Ventures, *A Large-Scale Facebook Survey Of U.S. Adults: Leveraging Precision Health to Increase COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake* (2021). Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f7671d12c27e40b67ce4400/t/60a3d7b3301db14adb211911/1621350327260/FINAL+or+posting_Facebook+Survey+Summary+Document+for+Website.docx.pdf