



Testimony in Support of SB 1178, An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days

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Labor and Public Employees Committee

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Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, Senator Sampson, Representative Ackert, and esteemed members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

Thank you for accepting this testimony in **support of S.B. 1178** on behalf of Health Equity Solutions (HES), a nonprofit organization with a statewide focus on advancing health equity through anti-racist policies and practices. Our vision is for every Connecticut resident to attain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

The United States is one of three developed countries that does not guarantee short-term or longer-term paid sick leave to its workforce.¹ On July 1, 2011, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to pass legislation requiring employers to allow workers to earn paid sick leave, and since then more than 20 states have passed similar laws.² However not all workers are protected under this law—**low-wage workers and workers of color are disproportionately left out**. Approximately 1.6 million workers in Connecticut are excluded from the law's protections, of whom:

- 6 in 10 are women,
- 6 in 10 are Latino/a workers,
- and more than half are Black workers.³

Not having paid sick days forces low-wage workers to go without pay, show up at work while sick, postpone seeking treatment for themselves or their dependents, or risk being fired when seeking care.⁴ Research has shown that workers with paid sick leave, including those covered by recent state mandates, are more likely to take time off from work when sick than those without paid sick leave.⁵ Having 10 or more paid sick leave days has been found to increase the odds of using preventive healthcare services.⁶ Furthermore, 1.3 million hospital emergency department visits could be prevented

¹ Paid sick leave improves public health outcomes and supports U.S. workers at a relatively low cost to employers. (2022, January 12). *Equitable Growth*. <https://equitablegrowth.org/paid-sick-leave-improves-public-health-outcomes-and-supports-u-s-workers-at-a-relatively-low-cost-to-employers/>

² Appelbaum, E., Milkman, R., Elliott, L., & Kroeger, T. (n.d.). *CONNECTICUT'S PAID SICK LEAVE LAW*. 1–20. <https://www.cepr.net/documents/good-for-buisness-2014-02-21.pdf>

³ Hawkins, D., & Zhu, J. (2019). Decline in the rate of occupational injuries and illnesses following the implementation of a paid sick leave law in Connecticut. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 62(10), 859–873. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23028>

⁴ Gould, E., & Schieder, J. (2017). *Work sick or lose pay?: The high cost of being sick when you don't get paid sick days* (p.1-11). Economic Policy Institute. [epi.org/130245](https://www.epi.org/130245)

⁵ Ma, Y., Johnston, K. J., Yu, H., Wharam, J. F., & Wen, H. (2022). State Mandatory Paid Sick Leave Associated With A Decline In Emergency Department Use In The US, 2011–19: Study examines the association between state mandatory paid sick leave and emergency department use. *Health Affairs*, 41(8), 1169–1175. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00098>

⁶ Hawkins, D., & Zhu, J. (2019). Decline in the rate of occupational injuries and illnesses following the implementation of a paid sick leave law in Connecticut. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 62(10), 859–873. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23028>

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each year and medical costs would decrease by \$1.1 billion annually, resulting in over \$500 million in savings for public health insurance programs.⁷

After Connecticut's 2011 law went into effect, workers in covered occupations experienced a faster decline in occupational injuries and illnesses than other workers in Connecticut and workers in the same occupations in New York and nationally.⁸

We strongly support S.B. 1178 as it advances health equity and would improve the reach of Connecticut's pioneering law by: removing the employer size threshold of 50 or more employees; modifying the job classification list to include all workers regardless of business size, job or industry; and, most importantly, eliminate the 680 hours (roughly 4-month) waiting period for an employee to start accumulating sick-pay hours. We strongly recommend the current paid sick days in Connecticut be increased from 40 to 80 hours for all workers.

These changes would allow more Connecticut workers to look after themselves and their loved ones, increase access to health care, and lead to a healthier and more equitable Connecticut.

Furthermore, ensuring all working people have access to paid sick days contributes to a healthy economy and reduces unnecessary medical costs. Without access to paid sick days, workers may be forced to quit their jobs, leading to worsening labor shortages. Including paid sick days in compensation and benefits plans decreases the probability of people leaving their job by at least 25% and may also lead to decreased turnover.⁹ Access to paid sick leave not only increases worker productivity, but also job satisfaction, commitment, and morale.¹⁰

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 1178, An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days. We can be reached with any questions at ksiegel@hesct.org or 860.937.6437.

⁷ Miller, K., Williams, C., & Yi, Y. (2011). *Paid Sick Days and Health*: (pp. i–33). Institute for Women's Policy Research. <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/IWPR-Miller-et-al-2011-PSD-and-emergency-hospital-visits.pdf>

⁸ Hawkins, D., & Zhu, J. (2019). Decline in the rate of occupational injuries and illnesses following the implementation of a paid sick leave law in Connecticut. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 62(10), 859–873. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23028>

⁹ Hill, H. D. (2013). Paid Sick Leave and Job Stability. *Work and Occupations*, 40(2), 10.1177/0730888413480893. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888413480893>

¹⁰ Paid Sick Leave Is Good For Business. (n.d.). *A Better Balance*. Retrieved March 5, 2023, from <https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/sickleavebusinesscase/>