



For Immediate Release

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New Paid Sick and Safe Days Law Will Benefit all DC Workers, Families

(Washington, DC) **Employment advocates and Councilmembers announced legislation for paid sick and safe days for D.C. workers today at the Wilson Building.** This law will give every worker in D.C. the opportunity to balance work and family.

Under the Paid Sick and Safe Days Act, co-introduced by Councilmembers Mendelson, Kwame Brown (D-At Large), Jim Graham (D-Ward 1), Mary Cheh (D-Ward 3), Harry Thomas, Jr. (D-Ward 5), and Marion Barry (D-Ward 8), and co-sponsored by Chairman Vincent Gray, Councilmembers David Catania (I-At Large), Carol Schwartz (R-At Large), Jack Evans (D-Ward 2) and Tommy Wells (D-Ward 6), **workers will be given a minimum standard of ten paid days off when they are sick or if a member of their family is sick, and domestic violence victims will be protected when they need to take leave for health and safety reasons.** Parents also would be able to use such days to take care of family needs, such as attend a parent-teacher conference at a child's school. Under current law, parents must take leave for those activities without pay, discouraging them from involvement in their children's lives.

The D.C. Employment Justice Center believes the current system does not reward hard work. With paid sick days, everyone wins. Employees win, businesses win, and the community wins. Workers who have been penalized by their employers when they needed time off to recover from grave situations spoke out at a rally outside of the City Council this morning, calling for paid sick days for all workers. Councilmember Phil Mendelson (D-At Large), a co-introducer of this bill, shared his excitement of introducing this act, which would lead the nation in providing these basic protections for workers.

According to the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, the D.C. bill will affect at least 210,000 workers. Nearly half of all private sector workers nationwide have no paid sick days, and when employees do not have sick leave, many go to work instead of taking care of themselves, which can result in infecting co-workers and customers, as well as prolonging their illness.

"With paid sick days, everyone wins— employees, businesses and the community at large," says Karen Minatelli, DC Employment Justice Center Director of Policy. "When employees have the option of taking a job-protected paid sick day, we will be one step closer to a better, more just system for families in the nation's capital. Policies such as this one help workers and their families achieve the middle class, the American dream."

At the D.C. Employment Justice Center's free weekly legal clinics for low wage workers, many workers report being punished or even fired for taking a day off when they were sick. Similarly, victims of domestic violence who needed time off to ensure their safety or to recover from injuries have been fired upon their return to work.

Following the passage of a comparable bill in San Francisco in November 2006, there has been a trend to bring paid sick days to all workers. Since January of 2007, paid sick day bills have been introduced in legislatures in Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri and Vermont. On the national level, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Representative Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT), recently reintroduced the Healthy Families Act.

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