

# An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Patricia Jehlen & Rep. Kay Khan

## The Missing Piece to Massachusetts Health Care Reform



Although most Massachusetts workers now have health insurance, **1.5 million workers in Massachusetts (47% of private sector workers) lack a single guaranteed paid sick day.**

Even more Massachusetts workers—**more than two thirds**—cannot take any sick time to care for a sick child or elderly parent.

**These workers can lose pay or even their jobs** if they stay home from work to get well, or to care for a sick child or relative. They can lose pay just by going to routine doctor's appointments to stay healthy.

### PAID SICK DAYS PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH

- Paid sick days minimize the spread of the flu, an illness that accounts for 10-12% of all illness-related work absences.
- Paid sick days prevent food and beverage contamination.
- Paid sick days prevent the spread of illnesses in daycare and school environments.

### PAID SICK DAYS SAVE MONEY

- All health care payers will save when employees can take better care of themselves and their families, reducing their health care expenditures.
- Employers save wages and taxes paid for workers who are at work, but too ill to be productive. They also save from decreased turnover and reduced spread of illnesses.
- The Commonwealth will enjoy cost-savings as a result of decreased spread of infectious diseases at work and at schools, reduced short-term nursing home stays, and reduced public assistance spending for illness-related job loss.

### PAID SICK DAYS ARE FAIR

- Workers should not have to choose between a job and their health or that of their family.
- Domestic violence survivors should not have to sacrifice their jobs because they must cope with the effects of domestic violence on themselves and their families.
- Employers who already offer paid sick days to their employees deserve a level playing field.

**"Now is the time to help families with paid sick days and better family leave, because nobody in America should have to choose between keeping their jobs and caring for a sick child or ailing parent." Barack Obama, 2008 Nomination Acceptance Speech.**

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# AN ACT ESTABLISHING PAID SICK DAYS

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**“The issue of whether primary-care providers are available when people are able to see them is going to affect lower-income people who are more likely to not be able to take time off in the middle day without losing pay...Non-English speakers are also more likely to be working in a job with that situation.”  
Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, Secretary EOHHS, November 29, 2008 Boston Globe “Many Continue to Rely on ERs”**

## KEY PROVISIONS:

- ✓ Eligible employees: All employees may earn up to 7 paid sick days per year, at a rate of 1 hour for every 30 hours worked.
- ✓ Covered employers: All employers (public and private) but an employer who already offers a more generous benefit will not have to modify its benefit plans.
- ✓ Employees may use leave intermittently and on a reduced work schedule basis.
- ✓ Allowable uses:
  - Illness, injury or health condition that requires staying home, or professional medical care.
  - Attending routine medical appointments.
  - Absences for domestic violence victims.
- ✓ Paid sick days may be used by employees for themselves or to care for their child, spouse, parent or parent of spouse.

## THIS BILL IS DESIGNED TO BALANCE EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE NEEDS:

- Employers may require medical certification for any absence that exceeds 3 consecutive days.
- Employers will not be required to provide more than 7 paid sick days in any given year.
- Employees will not cash out unused days upon termination of employment or extended leave.
- Unused sick days can be carried over at the end of a year but, unless an employer chooses to do so, will not accumulate to more than 7 paid sick days in any given year.
- Employers who offer 20 or more days of combined sick, vacation and personal days do not have to change their policies.

**People do get sick, and families do have emergencies. Paid sick days would give us more job security, help us care for our families and improve the relationship between employees and our companies.**  
*Betty Maguire, Dorchester Security Guard*

**You don't want people coming in and getting others sick and being unproductive. Even if their kids are sick they are going to be distracted on the job. And let's face it, if your children are sick you don't want to be stuck without any options.**  
*Rob Everts, Massachusetts Business Owner*

**In an office setting...a worker with the flu may infect one of every four co-workers....One sick worker can start a chain of infectious contacts that can ultimately be much more expensive for an employer than the cost of paid sick days for that first worker.**  
*Dr. Vicky Lovell, Institute for Women's Policy Research*