Testimony on HB 1356, Establishing minimum standards for sick and safe leave from employment, Before the House Labor Committee, January 26, 2015, by Marilyn P. Watkins

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of House Bill 1356, Establishing minimum standards for sick and safe leave from employment.

No one should be forced to go to work sick or when they have a sick child or parent who needs them. Yet except in the growing number of cities and states with sick leave standards in place, 40% of U.S. private sector workers have no paid sick leave.¹ In Washington, our largest employment center, Seattle, implemented paid sick and safe leave in September 2012. Yet about 1 million workers in our state still have no access to paid sick leave.

Unfortunately, it is usually those with the lowest incomes – who can least afford to miss even a day’s pay – who are least likely to be voluntarily offered paid sick leave by their employers. Only 20% of workers with the lowest 10% of pay have paid sick leave.

U.S. Private Sector Workers with Access to Paid Sick Leave, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest paid 10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


That means that children from low income families are less likely than middle and upper income kids to have a parent who can stay home with them when they are sick, or who can take the afternoon off to take them to the doctor. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation study found that 60% of working mothers who must miss work when a child is sick do not have paid sick leave.² Lack of sick leave contributes to the achievement and dropout gaps for low income kids and children of color.

Showing up for work or school sick spreads disease, reduces productivity, and increases workplace injuries. Researchers from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found workers without paid sick days are 28% more likely to suffer non-
fatal workplace injuries than workers with access to paid sick days.\textsuperscript{3} Lack of paid sick leave creates a further drag on our economy when workers do stay home sick and lose income that they would have spent in local businesses.

Paid sick leave standards have now been passed in nearly 20 cities and 3 states. There is plenty of evidence that these laws are making a positive difference, particularly for low and moderate income workers and their families. There is no evidence from any credible source using generally accepted social science methodologies that business or job growth has suffered in any of the jurisdictions with sick leave laws.

According to the University of Washington study of Seattle’s paid sick leave law, prior to implementation, two-thirds of employers did not provide sick leave to part-time employers; a year later three-fourths did. Provision of sick leave in restaurants increased from 14\% of employers to 78\%. Job growth has been stronger in Seattle than in the surrounding cities since the ordinance was implemented.\textsuperscript{4} In fact, Seattle was named recently by WalletHub as the best city in the country to find a job.

In Connecticut, the first state to implement a paid sick leave law in 2012, 45\% of for-profit firms reported increasing employee access to paid sick leave as a result, including about half of health and retail firms, and nearly two thirds of hospitality firms. Employers reported that in the previous 12 months two-thirds of employees had used some sick leave, with average usage of 4 days – about half the amount available to them. Only 11\% of surveyed employers reported that their costs had risen by 3\% or more due to the law. Employers also reported the law increased the number of workers calling in sick, but reduced the spread of disease and increased morale. at the time of the survey, 76.5\% of employers said they supported the law.\textsuperscript{5}

House Bill 1356 establishes proven standards that we know work to protect public health, family economic security, and business prosperity. Please pass paid sick and safe leave.

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\textsuperscript{4} “Implementation and Early Outcomes of the City of Seattle Paid Sick and Safe Time Ordinance,” prepared by Jennifer Romich et al, University of Washington, for the Seattle City Auditor, April 2014, \url{http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityAuditor/auditreports/PSSTO_ReportSummaryOCAEmail.pdf}.