 Responsible, healthy prevention

Everyone gets sick or needs to see the doctor now and then – but an estimated 1 million Washington workers get no paid sick days, including many in restaurants, retail, and even health care.

Paid sick leave allows ill workers to stay home – away from coworkers and customers, and parents to care for their sick kids, without losing wages.

Safe leave allows victims of domestic violence or sexual assault to seek safety, treatment, and legal assistance.

With paid sick days, people can seek preventive care and early treatment, as well as manage chronic conditions, lowering health care costs and staying more productive at work.

**Washington’s sick and safe leave bill** is modeled after Seattle’s successful law:

- Allows employees to earn paid leave, to use for the health needs of their families and themselves, or in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking
  - Up to 40 hours in firms with more than 4 up to 49 employees (Full-Time Equivalents)
  - Up to 56 hours annually in firms with 50 to 249 FTEs
  - Up to 72 hours annually in firms with 250 or more FTEs
- Provides flexibility for employers to offer leave as PTO, to continue existing policies that meet or exceed the standard, and to allow shift swapping.

Paid sick and safe leave keeps our economy stronger and all of us healthier.

“It makes sense to support your people, and they’ll support you - which will gain you market share, and make you more money than skimping on paid sick days. My business has grown and I’ve added a new location and a food truck since Seattle’s sick leave law took effect.”

Makini Howell
Owner: Plum Bistro, Plum Cafe, Plum Juice Bar, Hillside Quickie Too

“When I was in nursing school, I had 3 very little kids and a job with no sick leave. Once all of my children were sick and I really was not feeling well myself. If I went to work sick, I knew I would have a full check to pay bills. If I didn’t, I would have to rob Peter to pay Paul. I made the decision to go to work sick. Now I am a nurse and see how others have to make that decision. We all deserve to stay home when we are sick.”

Christy, RN, Tacoma
Seattle | Seattle’s paid sick and safe leave ordinance went into effect in September 2012. A 2014 evaluation by a team of University of Washington researchers was based on confidential economic data from the state, two comprehensive surveys of employers conducted a year apart, and in-depth interviews with small samplings of employers and workers. Findings include:

- The ordinance has expanded access to paid sick leave, especially in restaurants where the percentage of companies providing it increased from 14% to 78%.

- Since the law was implemented, jobs and businesses have grown faster in Seattle than in nearby cities of Bellevue, Everett, and Tacoma.

- 2/3 of employers reported no problems. Some had initial hassles with implementation that resolved in the first few months. Among those reporting, average ongoing costs averaged 0.4% of annual revenue. 7% said they raised prices and 5% that they decreased raises or bonuses.

- 70% of Seattle business owners support the law.

San Francisco | San Francisco’s job market has compared favorably to the surrounding counties and the state of California as a whole since the sick days law went into effect in 2007. A 2010 survey of more than 700 employers and 1200 employees found that 2/3 of employers supported the law, 7% reported reducing raises or bonuses, and 1 in 4 workers said they were better able to care for their own and their families’ health.

Connecticut | The first statewide law was implemented in 2012. In the period since it took effect, employment levels rose in key sectors covered by the law, including hospitality and health services. A survey of business owners found 3/4 supported the law, a large majority experienced no or small increased cost, and benefits included less spread of disease in the workplace, higher morale, and more part-timers covered.

Washington, D.C. | The City Auditor found that the 2008 sick and safe leave law “neither discouraged business owners from locating in the District nor encouraged business owners to move their businesses from the District.” In December 2013, the Council extended the sick leave law to tipped workers.

Paid sick leave standards have also been adopted in: Massachusetts; California; Oregon; Bloomfield, NJ; East Orange, NJ; Emeryville, CA; Eugene, OR; Irvington, NJ; Jersey City, NJ; Montclair, NJ; Montgomery County, MD; New York, NY; Newark, NJ; Oakland, CA; Passaic, NJ; Paterson, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Portland, OR; San Diego, CA; SeaTac, WA; Tacoma, WA; and Trenton, NJ.

Notes and references available on our website at www.waworkandfamily.org