

An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days, H1398, S930

Rep. Kay Khan and Sen. Pat Jehlen, Lead Sponsors

Helping Working Families Provide Care to Loved Ones

Almost 1 million private sector workers in Massachusetts lack a single guaranteed paid sick day.¹

Without paid sick days, workers across the Commonwealth are forced to make tradeoffs between their paycheck and caring for their families.

- Workers with young children occasionally need time off work to care for a sick child at home.
- Workers who serve as unpaid caregivers for elderly family members require short periods of time off to manage medical care, such as a doctor's appointment or a medical emergency.
- Yet, **more than half of workers (53%)** cannot take any sick time to care for a sick child or elderly adult.²

Working parents need paid sick leave to provide the proper care for their children.

- When parents have access to paid sick leave, they are able to take their children to well-child visits and for immunizations, which may prevent serious illnesses.³
- But when parents lack paid sick days, they cannot take time off when their children are sick, leading to prolonged illnesses and worse health outcomes.⁴
- Working parents pay a price too: one in five mothers reported that they or a family member had been fired or disciplined by an employer for taking time off to cope with an illness or to care for a sick child or family member.⁵

Massachusetts needs a basic workplace standard of paid sick days so workers do not have to choose between keeping their jobs and providing care to their families.

- ***An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days***, filed by Rep. Kay Khan and Sen. Patricia Jehlen, would allow all employees to earn up to 7 paid sick days per year, at a rate of 1 hour for every 30 hours worked.
- Allowable uses include: (1) illness, injury or health condition that requires staying home, or professional medical care; (2) attending routine medical appointments, and (3) absences for domestic violence survivors.
- Paid sick days may be used by employees for themselves or to care for their child, spouse, parent or parent of spouse.

¹ Claudia Williams, Robert Drago, Kevin Miller, and Youngmin Yi, "Access to Paid Sick Days in the States, 2010," (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2011).

² Tom W. Smith and Jibum Kim, "Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences," (Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center, 2010), 5.

³ Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001).

⁴ "Get Well Soon: Americans Can't Afford to Be Sick," (Washington, DC: National Partnership for Women & Families, 2004), 2.

⁵ Lake Research Partners telephone survey of 1,200 likely voters nationwide (2.8% margin of error), conducted June 20-27, 2007.

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KEY PROVISIONS OF THE PAID SICK DAYS ACT

All employees earn up to 7 paid sick days per year, at the rate of 1 hour for every 30 hours worked.

All employers (public and private) are covered by the bill. Employers offering more generous benefits will not have to modify their plans.

Employees may use leave for:

- 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 are not required to provide more than 7 paid sick days in any given year.

Employees cannot cash out unused days upon separation from employment or extended leave.

Unused sick days can be carried over at the end of a year, but an employee cannot accumulate more than 7 paid sick days in any given year, unless an employer provides otherwise.

Employers who offer 20 or more days of combined sick, vacation, and personal days do not have to change their policies.

To learn more, contact the Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition, a group of over 70 organizations committed to passing the Paid Sick Days Act in the Commonwealth.

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