

## THE HEALTHY FAMILIES ACT (H.R. 932/S. 497)

YWCA believes that no one should have to choose between their livelihood and their health, their family, or their safety. Yet this is the reality for far too many women and families. Over 80% of low-wage (\$8.25 or less per hour) workers do not have access to any paid sick days. For these workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color, missing a few days, or even just one day, of paid work can have significant economic consequences. The Healthy Families Act sets a national paid sick days standard that will provide families with much needed economic security, protect public health, and can decrease unnecessary health care costs.

### BACKGROUND

- ***Paid sick days provide families with economic security:*** Nearly one quarter of adults in the U.S. report that they have lost a job or have been threatened with losing their job for taking time off due to illness or to care for a sick child or relative. For a family without paid sick days, on average, 3.1 days of pay lost to illness are equivalent to the family's entire monthly health care budget, and 3.5 days are equivalent to a month of groceries.
- ***Paid sick days protect public health:*** Workers in jobs that require frequent contact with the public, including those employed in food preparation and service or child care, are the least likely to have paid sick days. Additionally, sick workers attending work and infecting other employees cost the U.S. economy \$180 billion annually.
- ***Paid sick days can decrease unnecessary health care costs:*** If all workers had paid sick days, 1.3 million emergency room visits could be prevented each year, saving \$1.1 billion annually—over half of which accrues to taxpayer-funded health insurance programs such as Medicare.

### WHAT THE HEALTHY FAMILIES ACT DOES

The Healthy Families Act would set a national paid sick days standard – a critical step toward meeting the health and financial needs of working families. The Healthy Families Act would:

- Allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to 7 job-protected paid sick days each year to be used to: recover from their own illnesses; access preventive care; provide care to a sick family member; attend school meetings related to a child's health condition; or seek assistance related to a domestic violence incident. Workers in smaller business could earn unpaid sick days.
- Include a simple method for calculating accrued sick time while allowing employers to require certification if an employee uses more than three paid sick days in a row, and would not prevent employers from using existing leave accrual policies.

### PLEASE CO-SPONSOR THE HEALTHY FAMILIES ACT

- Nearly 20 jurisdictions across the country have adopted paid sick days laws, most in the past two years. Evidence from these jurisdictions shows they are working well without adverse business or economic effects.

# YWCA IS ON A MISSION

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- According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a survey of business owners in Connecticut, a state with guaranteed paid sick leave, found that business owners have experienced minimal costs due to the policy, and a significant proportion of employers reported positive effects like improved productivity and morale.
- There is strong public support for universal access to paid sick days as well; 88 percent of U.S. voters want all workers to be able to earn paid sick days.
- According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, legally required paid sick days do not contribute to unemployment in 22 highly socially and economically developed countries.
- We ask that you co-sponsor the Healthy Families Act, like 140 Members of the House of Representatives and 32 Senators, so no American worker has to decide between their health and their job!

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