

Erratic work schedules create erratic family life

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A new bill in Congress reflects growing awareness that **work scheduling can make or break a family's well-being.**

It is easy for those of us who enjoy regular work hours to take for granted that we can plan our days and paychecks with stability. We know when we need to drop off or pick up our children at school activities or child care, and we can plan other important aspects of our lives—college classes, social or civic activities or even second jobs—around a **predictable work schedule.** We also know that we will be compensated for the same number of work hours every week.

Employees who have to check their schedule every week, or even every day, do not have that predictability. Their children suffer in the process.

Take the [story of Jannette](#), who must endure frequent and sometimes last-minute schedule changes that result in disrupted sleep, difficulty finding child care, an argument with her relatives or even a breakup with a significant other.

Jannette's life is dictated by the whims of **impersonal scheduling software that takes into account customer traffic, truck deliveries and shortstaffing, but not the needs of the employees.** Many businesses that still use human schedulers also subject their employees to erratic or frequently changing work hours.

Fortunately, members of Congress, including Reps. John Conyers and Gary Peters from Michigan, have proposed legislation that addresses this problem. The [Schedules That Work Act](#) would give all workers the right to request a flexible, predictable or stable schedule. Certain categories of workers would also have the right to receive such a schedule unless an employer has bona fide business reasons to refuse the request. (More on the [legislation can be found here.](#))

The [Michigan League for Public Policy supports this legislation.](#) It is currently in committee in both the U.S. House and Senate, and when and whether the bills receive hearings is unclear.

To help get things moving along, please let your [member of Congress](#) and Michigan's two [U.S. Senators](#) know that **you want workers to be able to have predictable, stable and flexible work hours.** Urge them to co-sponsor the Schedules that Work Act.



(Starbucks has responded to the New York Times article, saying that it will change its scheduling practices. The Center for Law and Social Policy responds that while the Starbucks changes are a start, it is not just about Starbucks, and we need public policies that protect workers.)

— *Peter Ruark*