

# Let's pass reasonable workplace policies

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Most of us agree that the best way to support ourselves and our families is through work. Our society places great value on working hard to move ahead. Yet, as a [new Michigan League for Public Policy paper explains](#), workplace policies can be as much a hindrance to moving ahead as low wages.

The League paper is being released the same day that a [Senate committee voted to pre-empt local governments](#) from enacting workplace ordinances, such as earned sick leave.

Those of us with professional jobs often take for granted that if we or a family member get sick, we can take time off from work to tend to those needs without losing wages. We also may take for granted a predictable work schedule, and that we will not be sent home early on a slow day and lose several hours of pay.

Many low-paid workers do not have these protections. **A child catching the flu or a slow shift at work can mean a smaller check on payday.** A last-minute schedule change can create difficulty securing child care or transportation. And a long-term illness or injury—or even a pregnancy—can result in loss of a job.

The League outlines **four policy changes that can help workers and their families:**

1. Require all employers to provide earned sick leave.
2. Urge Congress to establish a national paid family and medical leave insurance program.
3. Require employers to create predictable schedules.
4. Update the state child care subsidy.

Across Michigan and the country, people are becoming more aware of the need for earned sick leave and predictable scheduling. A [recent poll](#) shows that 83% of Michigan voters would support a law allowing workers to earn one hour of **paid sick time** for every 30 hours worked. **Scheduling issues** have also become more visible with the rise of automated just-in-time scheduling, which is good for saving companies money but creates difficulty for the workers.



**70%**  
of low-wage workers  
have no paid  
sick days

**Paid family and medical leave** is something that nearly every other industrialized country provides its workers. Even many countries that do not have a comprehensive paid leave system provide some level of paid maternity leave; **the United States is one of only eight countries that does not have paid leave for mothers of newborns**. While a family and medical leave insurance program would need to be enacted at the federal level, Michigan's Legislature can urge Congress to do this.

Finally, updating Michigan's child care subsidy would enable more parents to meet their families' needs without breaking the bank on costly child care.

Enacting even one of these policies will go a long way toward helping low-wage workers keep their jobs and contribute to the economy. Let's have that conversation in Michigan!

— *Peter Ruark*