The Earned Sick Time Act: Working Toward a Healthier, Happier Michigan

The Earned Sick Time Act would give Michigan workers the right to earn time off for health and family priorities, such as physical or mental illness and domestic abuse, without fear of repercussions from their employer. In November, voters will have the opportunity to approve this policy at the ballot box and to protect the nearly 2 million Michiganders currently lacking that right. Already adopted in various forms by most industrialized countries, 10 states, and dozens of local governments around the U.S., the Earned Sick Time Act is an important step toward making Michigan healthier, happier and more productive.

THE DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

How can employees accrue earned sick time? Employees can earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked.

How much paid/unpaid sick time can employees use?

- All employees are entitled to at least 72 hours of earned sick time.
  - Employees of small businesses are entitled to at least 40 hours of paid sick time. Their final 32 hours of sick time may be unpaid.
  - Employees of all other businesses are entitled to 72 hours of paid sick time.

In what situations can earned sick time be used?

- Mental or physical illness of the employee or a family member—including preventative care.
- Care required due to domestic violence or sexual assault of the employee or a family member.
- Closure of the workplace or of a child’s school/place of care by a public official.
- The employee or a family member’s presence in the community jeopardizing public health.

Quick Facts

| 39¢  | Average hourly cost of providing paid sick leave to U.S. workers.¹ |
| 70%  | Percent of Michigan children in families in which all parents work, preventing those parents from staying home with them when they are sick.² |
| 19%  | Percent of working mothers in the U.S. who have lost a job from being sick or caring for a sick child.³ |
| 17,214 | Approximate number of Michigan food service workers who have attended work while sick.⁴ |

EARNED SICK TIME PRIORITIZES MICHIGAN FAMILIES AT WORK AND AT HOME

Protecting Workers’ and Families’ Health: When workers cannot take time off to properly address health issues of their own or of a family member, Michigan’s families become increasingly sicker, less happy and less productive. Delaying medical care is proven to exacerbate health problems and is a significant factor in high healthcare costs. In addressing this problem, the Earned Sick
Time Act would improve quality of life for Michigan families and create safer, healthier work and school environments for all.

- **Lack of earned sick leave incentivizes neglect of personal and family health.** Workers who do not have paid sick days are three times more likely to neglect medical care for themselves and nearly two times more likely to neglect medical care for their families.⁵

- **A priority for women:** Nearly 40% of mothers report sole responsibility for taking time off of work to be with sick children, compared with only 3% of fathers. As a result, Michigan women stand to gain significant relief under the Earned Sick Time Act.

**Protecting the Public’s Health:** Without mandatory earned sick time, occupations requiring frequent contact with the public face particularly limited access to paid sick days. In addition, sick workers and their children endanger their workplaces, schools and places of care by attending while ill. This poses a significant public health concern, which the Earned Sick Time Act could easily address.

- **Lack of access to earned sick time among food service workers poses a threat to the public.** Only 19% of food service workers have access to paid sick days. According to a 2013 study, 60% report working while sick, risking the rapid spread of illness in the community. Nearly half of those workers report doing so because they did not have paid sick days.⁵ Comparably, only 25% of workers in personal care and service occupations have access to paid sick days, posing a similar risk to those they care for. The Earned Sick Time Act would significantly reduce such occurrences, protecting the health of workers, consumers and the public as a whole.

- **Reducing risk for coworkers and classmates:** A report found that without paid sick days, parents are nearly twice as likely to send a sick child to school or day care, jeopardizing the health of both their own child and the children around them.⁷ Similarly, employees pose a risk to their coworkers when they attend work while ill. During the recent Hepatitis A outbreak in southeast Michigan, in which 850 individuals were infected, 686 were hospitalized, and 27 died, Oakland County held several vaccine clinics specifically for food service workers. The outbreak had impacted at least a dozen restaurants, highlighting the devastating consequences of sick workers being unable to take time off. Similarly, ill employees who attended work during the H1N1 pandemic of 2009 are estimated to have infected up to 7 million co-workers—illnesses that an earned sick time policy could have helped prevent.⁸

**OVERWHELMING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE (2015)⁹**

**DISPELLING BUSINESS CONCERNS**

Research shows that earned leave policies do not significantly increase business costs. In a 2011 study, the vast majority of San Francisco employers reported no negative effect on profits as a result of the city’s 2007 earned sick leave policy. Similar results have been seen in Connecticut, Washington, D.C. and Seattle.¹⁰

In fact, **earned sick leave can actually increase business productivity.** In 2015, researchers found that employees take an average of only four sick days off per year, but lose an astonishing 57.5 days due to “presenteeism”—showing
up to work despite being physically or mentally unwell.\textsuperscript{11} That is almost 12 full working weeks of productivity lost. The Earned Sick Time Act could reduce those significant losses and cultivate a healthier and more productive workforce in Michigan.

**DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES COULD BENEFIT THE MOST: COMPARING ACCESS TO PAID SICK DAYS NATIONWIDE\textsuperscript{12}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workers with Low Annual Personal Earnings:</th>
<th>Communities of Color:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22% $1—$14,999</td>
<td>46% Latinx/Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86% $65,000+</td>
<td>53% American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62% African-American/Black</td>
<td>63% White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**ENDNOTES**

1. United States Department of Labor
2. United States Census Bureau
4. United States Department of Labor
8. Drago, Robert & Miller, Kevin, *Sick at Work: Infected Employees in the Workplace During the H1N1 Pandemic*, Institute for Women’s Policy Research (February 2010)