

February 7, 2008

Dear Member of Congress,

We are writing to urge your support of the Healthy Families Act, a groundbreaking piece of legislation that guarantees full-time workers seven paid sick days a year, and part-time workers a pro-rata amount of paid sick days, to recover from their own illness or care for a sick family member. Congress should waste no time in passing this bill, which is tremendously important to people all across our country.

Chances are each of us will get sick or need to care for a sick family member this year. But not all of us have the option to take time off from work to get better or to care for a sick family member. **In the U.S. today, nearly half (48 percent) of private sector workers do not have a single paid sick day to use for themselves or to care for a family member.** And 94 million hard-working people do not have a single paid sick day they can use to care for a sick child.

Workers want to be responsible on the job *and* be able to care for their families. In 78 percent of today's families, both parents work for pay – and the typical couple in America now works close to 90 hours per week. But our policies lag desperately behind this reality – and families are struggling as a result. We can and must do better – and we will, if we truly value families.

Providing paid sick days benefits all workers including women and seniors. Nearly half (49 percent) of working mothers miss work when a child comes down with a common illness, and women are more likely to have low-wage jobs that do not offer paid sick days. Parents who lack paid sick days are often forced to choose between the jobs they need and caring for their families.

While this issue is important for families with children, it also affects the more than one-third of working people with elder care responsibilities who need to take time away from work to provide care. Thirty-five percent of workers, both women and men, report that they have cared for an older relative in the past year, and the responsibilities for caregiving will increase as Baby Boomers age.

Three in four low-wage workers (79 percent) do not have a single paid sick day. When low-wage workers get sick, or need to take care of a sick child or take an elderly parent to a medical appointment, they are faced with an impossible choice: lose a day of pay and possibly even their job, or take the time they need to take care of their families. Half of low-wage working parents report losing pay to stay home and care for a sick child or being forced to leave children home alone.

Finally, paid sick days are a key component of safeguarding our nation's public health. Workers who disproportionately lack paid sick days work with the public every day. Seventy-eight percent of food-service and hotel workers do not have a single paid sick day. Many of these workers are employed in child care centers, retail establishments, and nursing homes. When

they go to work sick, their colleagues and all others they contact face an increased risk of contracting illness.

Workers' access to paid sick days is critical to a productive and vibrant economy. When workers are provided with paid sick days, employers benefit from reduced turnover, higher productivity, and reduced spread of contagion in the workplace. If workers were provided just seven paid sick days per year, as the Healthy Families Act proposes, our national economy would experience a net *savings* of \$8.1 billion per year, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

In a nation that values families, worker should not have to choose between their jobs and their health or a family member's health. Concerned citizens around the country are taking action and advancing paid sick days initiatives at the city and state level. We urge you to demonstrate your strong commitment to America's working families by becoming a cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,

National Partnership for Women & Families
9to5 Bay Area
9to5 Colorado
9to5 Poverty Network Initiative – Wisconsin
9to5, National Association of Working Women
ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)
AFL-CIO
AFSCME
Alpha One, Maine
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Friends Service Committee
American Medical Student Association
American Public Health Association
American Rights at Work
Americans for Democratic Action
Asian American Justice Center
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, (APALA, AFL-CIO)
Association of Flight Attendants – CWA
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Atlanta 9to5
Atlanta/North Georgia Labor Council
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Women's Health Imperative
Business and Professional Women/USA (BPW)
Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation

Catholic Charities USA
Center for American Progress
Center for Community Change
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Church Women United
Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)
Coalition on Human Needs
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
DC Employment Justice Center
Docs for Tots
Economic Opportunity Institute
Epilepsy Foundation
Equality Maine
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
FamiliesUSA
Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on Caregiving
Family Voices -- NJ
Feminist Majority
Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN)
Georgia Stand-UP
Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition, Milwaukee, WI
Healthy Families, Healthy City Coalition, Madison, WI
Hmong American Women's Association, Milwaukee, WI
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for One Wisconsin
Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR)
Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)
International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
Jewish Women International
Kids Project
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
Labor Project for Working Families
Laborers' International Union
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR)
Legal Momentum
LIUNA Women's Caucus
Los Angeles 9to5
LULAC
Maine Center for Economic Policy
Maine Women's Lobby
Massachusetts Paid Family Leave Coalition
Matria Healthcare, Inc.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)
MomsRising
Montgomery County Commission for Women
Ms. Foundation for Women
Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)
National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC)/MOTHERS Initiative
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Education Association (NEA)
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Family Caregivers Association
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Respite Coalition
National Urban League
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Jersey Parent-to-Parent
New Prospect Family Praise and Worship Center
North Carolina Justice Center
Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU)
OWL, the voice of midlife and older women
ParentsWork
PathWays PA (PA Family Economic Self Sufficiency Project)
Pennsylvania AFL-CIO
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Pride At Work
Public Justice Center
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
RESULTS
SEIU District 1199 OH/WV/KY
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, New Jersey
Take Care Net
The AIDS Action Council
The AIDS Institute
The Jewish Council for Public Affairs
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Trust for America's Health
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
UNITE HERE International Union
United Auto Workers (UAW)
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries
United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)
United Steelworkers (USW)
Voices for America's Children
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women Employed
Women in Need Industries, Maine
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment
Women's Law Project
Workers' Rights Center, Madison, WI
Working America