

FACT SHEET



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SB 481/HB898: Support paid sick days for all employees

Support: SB 481 – Senator Favola (D-31st)
HB 898 – Delegate Guzman (D-31st)

Problem: Approximately 41 percent of private sector workers, **1.2 million workers in Virginia, have no paid sick days** or any paid time off (PTO). This creates a crisis for low-wage workers who must choose between taking a sick day for themselves or their children and getting paid. In addition, many workers can be fired for taking a sick day.

Policy solution: Create a paid sick day standard to require all employers with 15 or more employees to provide up to 40 hours (five days) of paid sick time and up to 16 hours (2 days) of unpaid time for employers with one to 14 workers. Workers accrue 1 hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked. PTO policies qualify as paid sick days.

Who benefits: Almost everyone benefits from a paid sick day standard, which is why 85 percent of voters say employers should offer paid sick days. Paid sick days help:

- **Workers and their families** - When a worker takes 3.5 unpaid sick days, the average family loses a month's worth of groceries. Workers are forced to choose between feeding their families and caring for themselves or their children. Workers and their children need to be able to stay home when they are sick.
- **Schools** - Parents who don't have paid sick days are more than twice as likely to send their children to school sick, than parents who have paid sick days. Sick children can't learn. Sick children spread germs to children and teachers.
- **Public health** - Low-wage workers (food-service, personal health care, and childcare

workers) are the least likely to have paid sick days. More than 80 percent of food industry workers and 75 percent of childcare workers have no paid sick days. More than half of all Norovirus outbreaks can be traced back to sick food service workers who were forced to choose between working sick and losing pay or their job.

- **Businesses** - Without paid sick days, workers go to work sick, infecting others and impacting productivity. Employers lose \$160 billion annually in productivity due to "presenteeism" (the practice of coming to work sick). Providing paid sick days results in reduced turnover – saving businesses money. The restaurant industry, which has a high turnover rate, found that implementing workplace benefits can reduce turnover by 50 percent.
- **People of color** – In the US, about 38 percent of African Americans and 50 percent of Latinos do not have access to a single paid sick day. More than 25 percent of Latino households and 30 percent of African American households have no savings and cannot afford to take unpaid time off from work.

Thirteen states have paid sick days: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington have paid sick days. In addition, more than 20 municipalities have paid sick day policies. Of the 13 states with paid sick days, nine of them rank higher than Virginia in overall health.

Sources: Family Values @ Work, National Partnership for Women & Families, United Health Foundation, and U.S Bureau of Labor & Statistics