

## Healthy Families Act (HR 2460/S 1152)

**NCJW MESSAGE:** Throughout its history, NCJW has been committed to advocating for laws, policies, and employment practices that allow workers to meet both family and work responsibilities. The Healthy Families Act helps achieve that work-family balance by guaranteeing a minimum number of paid sick days so that workers don't have to choose between going to work and caring for themselves or a sick family member. Importantly, the bill also allows victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking to use paid sick days to seek assistance. NCJW believes that the Healthy Families Act is both a critical support for working families and an essential safeguard for victims of domestic violence whose safety often depends on their level of financial security.

### TALKING POINTS:

- ▶ **Everyone gets sick: not everyone has time to get better.** Four in ten private-sector workers don't have a single paid sick day to care for themselves when they are ill.
- ▶ **Women are least likely to have paid sick days.** Low-wage workers—the majority of whom are women—are less likely to have paid sick days than higher paid workers. And, the industries that employ the most women are the *least likely* to offer paid sick days. More than half of retail workers and three-fourths of accommodations and food service workers are without paid sick days.
- ▶ **The Healthy Families Act (HR 2460/S 1152) would enable workers to earn up to seven paid sick days a year** to recover from short-term illness; to care for a sick family member; for routine medical care; or to seek assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Workers would earn one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours (seven days) per year, unless the employer chooses to allow employees to earn more hours.
- ▶ **Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking must be able to leave a violent situation and access necessary services without risking their jobs or their paychecks.** Paid sick and safe days would protect victims' paychecks and jobs when they need time off to seek assistance. This job security is particularly important because victims of domestic violence often stay with their abusers in order to keep their housing, health care, or income. The loss of employment can be devastating for victims who need economic security to ensure safety.
- ▶ **A basic workplace standard of paid sick days would help prevent workers from choosing between their own health—or the health of their family—and their paychecks or even their jobs.** Half of working mothers miss work when their child gets sick. And, of these mothers, half do not get paid when they take this time off. Among low-income working mothers, two in three report losing pay.

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### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

#### Why is the Healthy Families Act so important?

- ▶ Everyone gets sick: not everyone has time to get better.
- ▶ When people have no choice but to go to work sick, they risk infecting others.
- ▶ Parents who can't afford to miss a day's pay often send their sick children to school or child care, endangering the health of their classmates.
- ▶ Children get well faster when a parent cares for them. Yet, 94 million working people don't have paid sick days to care for an ill child—and cannot afford to take time off without pay.

#### Our economy is struggling, is now really the best time to raise basic workplace standards?

Paid sick days would actually strengthen our economy. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, if workers were offered seven paid sick days a year, our national economy would experience a net savings of \$8.1 billion due to increased productivity and reduced turnover. The annual cost to businesses of lost productivity due to domestic violence is estimated at \$900 million.

#### Won't paid sick days hurt businesses?

No. In fact, paid sick day policies save employers money. Without them, businesses face higher turnover, spend more on hiring and training new workers, and risk spreading illness. In addition, a minimum standard of paid sick days would level the playing field for employers who already provide paid sick days.

#### What about small businesses?

The Healthy Families Act only applies to businesses with 15 or more employees.

#### Why do victims of domestic violence need paid sick days?

Estimates indicate that women in the US lose nearly eight million days of paid work each year because of domestic violence. Without paid sick and safe days, these victims are in grave danger of losing their jobs. And, without the financial security that a job provides, a woman is less likely to be able to bear the financial burden that comes with leaving an abusive relationship.