



Women & Paid Sick Days in Vermont **Supporting Our State's Women & Families with Dignity at Work**

Women bear the brunt of an economy increasingly filled with jobs in low-wage industries, and jobs that are part-time and temporary. More and more women and mothers are skating on thin ice in jobs and industries where **uncertainty and insecurity are the new**

norm. While making up nearly half of the country's workforce¹ and doing two-thirds of caregiving nationally,² about half of women are denied crucial rights at work that would support women's dignity, livelihoods and families.

- Forty-three percent of women working in the private sector are not able to take a single paid sick day when they are ill,³ and more than half of working mothers (54%) do not have even a few paid sick days they can use to care for their sick children.⁴
- Ninety-six percent of single mothers say paid sick days is the workplace reform that would help them the most.⁵
- Women make up two-thirds of minimum wage workers nationwide, and these workers often get zero paid sick days.⁶ Women are also far more likely than men to work part time, often for family reasons.⁷
- 1 in 3 U.S. women, or 42 million women, plus 28 million children, either live in poverty or are right on the brink of it (with the "brink of poverty" defined as making \$47,000 a year for a family of four).⁸
- Half of all working mothers must miss work if their child is sick, compared to 30 percent of working fathers. And half of all working mothers who do stay home with children when they are sick report that they do not get paid when they must do so.⁹
- If we exclude the state's most unstable jobs – including part-time and temporary work, and jobs in low-wage industries – from improved workplace standards, we incentivize the creation of more of these jobs. Our communities need jobs that can sustain livelihoods

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012, August 3). Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age (Table A-1). <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm> (Unpublished calculation)

² National Alliance for Caregiving. (2009, November). Caregiving in the U.S. National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP publication. http://www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving_in_the_US_2009_full_report.pdf

³ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2011, March). Paid Sick Day Access Rates by Gender and Race/Ethnicity. <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-day-access-rates-by-gender-and-race-ethnicity-2010>

⁴ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2011, March). Paid Sick Day Access Rates by Gender and Race/Ethnicity. <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-day-access-rates-by-gender-and-race-ethnicity-2010>

⁵ Maria Shriver's annual report on Women in America, released January 20, 2014.

<http://nation.time.com/2014/01/13/11-surprising-facts-about-women-and-poverty-from-the-shriver-report/>

⁶ Women in Poverty: An American Crisis. Stories from the 2014 Shriver Report.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/special-report/shriver-report>

⁷ Evaluating Paid Sick Leave: Social, Economic and Health Implications for Seattle. Marilyn P. Watkins, PhD for the Economic Opportunity Institute. May 2011. <http://seattlehealthyworkforce.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/evaluating-paid-sick-leave.pdf>

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Expanding Access to Paid Sick Leave: The Impact of the Healthy Families Act on America's Workers. March 2010. U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee.

http://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=abf8aca7-6b94-4152-b720-2d8d04b81ed6

and families, not unreliable work that forces us to choose between our paychecks and our health.

We can take action this session toward a solution to this crisis.

The proposed Earned Sick Days Bill (H.208) would ensure that all workers in Vermont could take up to 7 paid sick days each year to care for themselves or their family members, seek routine and preventive care; or deal with the effects of domestic and sexual violence. Everyone has the right to work with dignity, and everyone has the right to be as healthy as possible. Nobody should be forced to sacrifice their health, or that of their loved ones, because they can't afford to take a day off work. Paid sick days are one key measure toward an economy that fulfills our human right to work with dignity.

Voices of the Crisis and the Solution

I recently worked at a local store for about 8 months. I had some dental issues arise and developed an abscess. Right after I had my tooth extracted, I had to go to work with a dental note stating that I should be taking that day off. I ended up working anyway because I was afraid they would let me go if I didn't. The next day I was in so much pain that I called them, knowing they already had a doctor's note. That's when they fired me. I was only making minimum wage so missing any days of work was not affordable. I'm looking for another job now, but I know if I end up in another retail job the same thing could happen again. –Candice Cupp of Burlington



For most of my adult career, I have worked in the service industry, one of the largest industries that does not offer paid sick days. People in this line of work already don't earn good salaries and are forced to go into work sick. We put too much emphasis on simply showing up to work, rather than doing a good job or caring for the well-being of the worker and their coworkers. This is why I believe paid sick days should be mandatory. We have a duty to care for the members of our society. All of them. –Desiree Roberts of Monkton



If Vermont is going to lead the way with universal healthcare, it must also ensure that the 60,000 people who currently can't leave work when ill can access healthcare through this system. Vermont must lead by ensuring the right of everyone in our state to maintain their dignity and care for themselves and their families – without losing pay or jobs – by passing paid sick days legislation. –Mari Cordes, Registered Nurse, President of the VT Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals, and resident of Lincoln

Vermont Workers' Center

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