

# Healthy Families Act Toolkit

February 2015

Background on the Healthy Families Act

Key Talking Points

Press Statement Template

Letter to the Editor Templates

## Background on the Healthy Families Act

The Healthy Families Act would set a national paid sick days standard. It would:

- ▶ Allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care, provide care to a sick family member, or attend school meetings related to a child's health, disability or special education needs. Workers in businesses with less than 15 employees would earn up to seven job-protected unpaid sick days each year to be used for the same reasons, unless their employers choose to offer paid sick days.
- ▶ Allow workers who are victims of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault to use their paid sick days to recover or seek assistance related to an incident.
- ▶ Include a simple method for calculating accrued sick time. Workers would earn a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours (seven days) per year, unless the employer selects a higher limit.
- ▶ Allow employers to require certification if an employee uses more than three paid sick days in a row. For victims of domestic violence, the certification may be from a law enforcement officer or victim advocate.
- ▶ Allow employers to use their existing policies, as long as they meet the minimums set forth in the Healthy Families Act for time, types of use and method of use, and give employers flexibility as to how they define a "year" for the purposes of accrual.

## Key Talking Points

- ▶ It is difficult for people to afford the basics like food and housing – much less get ahead – when employers fail to set a basic paid sick days floor for their workers.
- ▶ At least 43 million Americans don't have access to paid sick days, which threatens their financial security, their health, and the health of our communities.
- ▶ The Healthy Families Act is a common sense bill that would establish a much-needed national paid sick days standard, allowing people – no matter where they live or work – to earn time away from their jobs to recover from illness or get medical care.
- ▶ Existing paid sick days laws clearly demonstrate that laws are working well.
- ▶ Employers generally favor the laws, and job and business growth rates continue to rise.

- ▶ In short: When people have access to paid sick days, workers and their families, businesses and the economy do better and everyone has a fair shot at getting ahead.

## Press Statement Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

Contact: [Name, Email Address, Phone Number]

### **[Organization Name] Applauds Introduction of the Healthy Families Act, Urges [State] Lawmakers to Pass the Much-Needed Paid Sick Days Legislation**

[CITY, STATE] – [Date] – “Members of Congress today introduced the Healthy Families Act – legislation recently called for by President Obama that would establish a much-needed national paid sick days standard for the country. This is great news for the [XXX] people in [City/State Name] and across the country who are working hard but don’t have the basic support they need to manage job and family, and that businesses and the economy need to thrive. All members of Congress should get behind this bill right away and prioritize its passage.

At least 43 million private sector workers in the United States cannot earn paid sick days to use when they get sick. As a result, they are forced to choose between their health and a paycheck or even their jobs when they get the flu or other common and often contagious illnesses, or they need medical treatment or preventive care. At [Organization Name], we care deeply about [organizational mission]. We urge Congress to pass the Healthy Families Act so people can care for themselves and their loved ones while making ends meet and contributing to the economy.

Paid sick days policies have been tested and are working well across the country, benefitting workers, their families, businesses and the economy. And many cities and three states have passed their own laws. [City/State Name] families and communities deserve better than to have to sacrifice their jobs, their health, and their economic security when they get sick. We applaud U.S. Senator Patty Murray and Representative Rosa DeLauro for introducing this bill today, and we urge [State Congressional Members] to support the important national paid sick days standard it would establish.”

###

## Letter to the Editor Templates

### **GENERAL/HFA INTRO**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: People in [City/State Name] and across the country work hard every day but are one illness or sick kid away from financial hardship or job loss.

That's because [number of workers without paid sick days] workers in [City/State Name] can't earn a single paid sick day.

Fortunately, some members of Congress are trying to help fix the problem following the president's clear call for action on the issue. The Healthy Families Act, which was introduced [today/this week], would establish a much-needed national paid sick days standard that would allow all workers – no matter where they live or work – to earn time away from their jobs to recover from illness or get medical care.

Paid sick days laws have been tested and are working well in states and cities across the country, and all of the evidence shows they have a positive impact on families' financial stability, businesses' bottom lines, and everyone's health. Put simply: They are common sense policies that make a big difference.

[State's] congressional delegation [or specific member of Congress, or state/local lawmakers] should stand up for [City/State Name] working families, businesses and the local economy by supporting the Healthy Families Act. It is past time.

Sincerely,  
[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

## **ECONOMIC SECURITY**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: It is difficult for people to afford the basics like food and housing – much less get ahead – when employers fail to set a basic paid sick days floor for their workforce. And the more than [number without paid sick days] workers in [city/state name] who don't have paid sick days know this all too well.

For a typical family without this basic right, a little more than three days of pay lost to illness are equivalent to the family's entire monthly health care budget, and three-and-a-half days are equivalent to its entire monthly grocery budget. No one should have to lose their economic security when they get sick.

That's why the [state's] congressional delegation [or specific member of Congress, or state/local lawmakers] need to support a national standard like the Healthy Families Act, which would allow workers to earn paid sick days and protect families' economic security. Until they do, too many [city/state name] families will continue to struggle.

Sincerely,  
[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

## **WOMEN**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: When women do better, families do better. That's why it's shocking that in [city/state name], where women make up [percent of workforce] percent of the workforce, more than [number without paid sick days] people don't have basic paid sick days.

Paid sick days are critical to the economic security of women and their families. Women are the sole or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of U.S. households. The vast majority are primarily responsible for their children's health. When working women without paid sick days get sick or their children become ill, they are forced to make impossible choices between their families' health and a paycheck or their jobs.

To make matters worse, the very professions dominated by women – food service, child care, retail and office administration – are the least likely to offer paid sick days. These are the very jobs that tend to require public interaction and provide opportunities to spread illness.

[State's] congressional delegation [or specific member of Congress, or state/local lawmakers] must stand up for working women by supporting a national paid sick days standard like the Healthy Families Act. It's the right thing to do for our families, businesses, public health and the [city/state].

Sincerely,  
[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: Workers without paid sick days affect all of us. That's because these workers face an impossible choice when illness strikes: risk their economic security by staying home or their health and the health of the public by going to work.

Adults without paid sick days are 1.5 times more likely to go to work sick, and more than twice as likely to send a sick child to school or day care. And jobs requiring frequent public contact are some of the least likely to offer paid sick days.

The public health consequences are serious. During the H1N1 outbreak, an estimated seven million people caught the flu from co-workers. In 2008, an Ohio restaurant worker had to go to work sick and more than 500 people became violently ill. In 2011, a sick worker in North Carolina caused a hepatitis outbreak.

Sadly, public health crises can easily happen in [city/state name]. That's why the [state's] congressional delegation [or specific member of Congress, or state/local lawmakers] need to support a national paid sick days standard like the Healthy Families Act – for the good of all of us.

Sincerely,  
[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

## **BUSINESS**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: Paid sick days make good business sense. So why do more than [number without paid sick days] workers in [city/state name] lack paid sick days that would keep them healthier, happier and more productive? And why is the business lobby opposed to this basic right?

Here are the facts: Paid sick days reduce turnover and the cost of hiring and training new employees. They decrease the productivity lost when employees work sick. And they help workers recover faster and obtain medical care – so they can return to work and prevent the spread of illness to co-workers and the public.

In San Francisco, where a law that lets workers earn paid sick days passed in 2006, two-thirds of employers support the law. They overwhelmingly report that profits haven't declined, and the city has experienced job growth compared to surrounding counties. The state of Connecticut and the cities of Washington, D.C. and Seattle have generated similar evidence: the number of jobs and businesses continue to grow and none of the "parade of horrors" some feared has come to pass.

There is simply no good reason for [city/state name] businesses or organized trade associations to oppose a paid sick days law. A national standard like the Healthy Families Act would make offering paid sick days a universal practice – and ensure healthier workplaces, more satisfied and productive workers, and better bottom lines.

Sincerely,  
[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

## **HEALTH CARE COSTS**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: For [number without paid sick days] [city/state name] workers and their families, proper health care is largely out of reach. That's because they don't have basic paid sick days – and it means higher costs for them, their employers and our communities.

Think about it: When someone has to work sick, illness can spread to their co-workers and the public. This is especially true in food service, child care and retail – the jobs least likely to offer paid sick days. If more people get sick, more people seek care and costs rise.

Workers without paid sick days also often forego preventive care and use emergency rooms because they can't take time off work. This can have a devastating impact on their health, and emergency trips can cost two to five times more than primary care. Nationally, an estimated \$1.1 billion in health costs could be saved if everyone had paid sick days.

[City/state name] workers, businesses and communities should not have to pay more because workers can't earn paid sick days. Supporting a national standard like the Healthy Families Act is an easy way for [state's] congressional delegation [or specific member of Congress, or state/local lawmakers] to help make our [city/state] healthier and save us all money. It's time.

Sincerely,

[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]