

## It is Time for Earned Sick Leave in Michigan

**M**ichigan should enact an earned sick leave law. This would help low-paid workers keep their jobs, increase productivity and reduce employee turnover, and protect the health of other employees and the public.

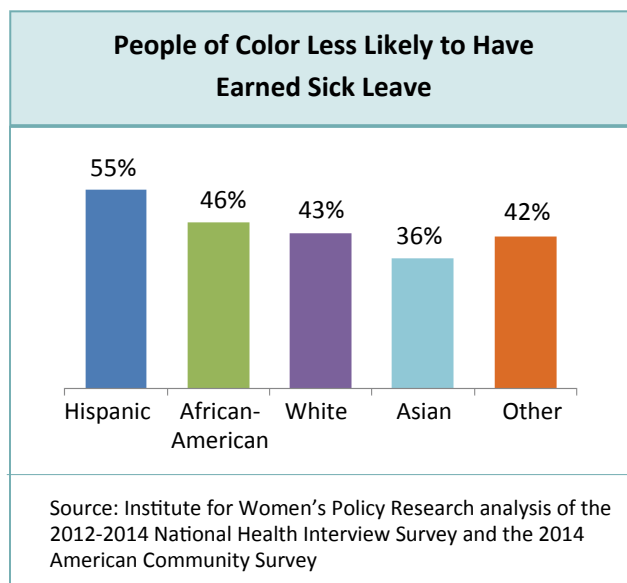
Many middle- and upper-income workers have the ability to take time off for sickness or family needs. But for many low-paid workers in Michigan, becoming sick can cause loss of money or even a job. It can put a worker in the difficult position of having to decide whether to stay home and lose wages, or to go to work and risk becoming sicker, work less productively and expose coworkers (and in many cases the public) to illness. Parents may feel pressure to forgo needed doctor checkups and medical care for themselves or their children because they cannot afford to lose the wages due to absence from work. They may even send their child to school sick because they cannot afford to stay home to take care of them.

An earned sick leave law in Michigan would require most employers to bank sick time for their workers based on the number of hours they have worked. Several cities and states have already passed sick leave laws and it is time for Michigan to do the same.

### WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM AN EARNED SICK LEAVE LAW?

More than 1.7 million (44%) Michigan workers cannot take time off with pay when they or one of their children are ill.<sup>1</sup> This is true for 55% of Michigan's Hispanic workers, 46% of African-American workers, 67% of workers in service occupations and 78% of workers who work less than 35 hours per week.<sup>2</sup> (See appendix for more figures on earned sick leave by demographic.)

Missing work due to sickness causes not only a loss of wages for workers without sick leave, but can also lead to a loss of employment. Working mothers are especially at risk. In a 2013 survey commissioned by Oxfam America, 1 out of 7 low-wage workers and 1 out of 5 low-wage mothers reported losing a job in the past four years because they were sick or needed to care for a family member.<sup>3</sup> Such job instability and its resulting stress can harm the social and intellectual development of children who already are at risk due to poverty.<sup>4</sup>



Workers without earned sick leave have reported working while in immense pain, delaying needed treatment, leaving sick children alone at home or in the hospital, spreading germs in the workplace and among the public, and receiving threats of retaliation from their employers for caring for a sick family member rather than going in to work.<sup>5</sup> The fact that so many workers in the service industries do not get earned sick days

indicates that an earned sick leave law will protect public health in addition to family well-being.

## WOULD AN EARNED SICK LEAVE LAW BE GOOD FOR MICHIGAN BUSINESSES?

A study of Connecticut's earned sick leave law shows that while businesses were concerned about a negative impact, for the most part the law imposed minimal burdens.<sup>6</sup> Employers indicated that most employees used fewer sick days than available and appeared to save up their sick days for when they were really needed; only two-thirds of workers had used the sick days available to them and workers took an average of four days per year.<sup>7</sup> The study also found that only 10% of employers reported increased payroll costs of 3% or more, and that administrative costs of tracking earned sick leave were minimal.<sup>8</sup> Although business groups in Connecticut had initially strongly opposed the legislation, 40% of employers were very supportive of it 18 months after the law took effect and 37% were somewhat supportive.<sup>9</sup> These figures suggest that although business groups in Michigan oppose enactment of a mandatory earned sick leave law, the effects of such a law would be far less dire (and more beneficial to the state overall) than the warnings of these opponents would suggest.



## MICHIGAN SHOULD ENACT AN EARNED SICK LEAVE LAW

The United States is 1 of only 3 out of 22 high-income countries that do not require employers to provide earned sick leave that would cover a five day illness. Most of the countries guarantee at least five days of sick leave per year, while a few have social insurance programs to cover both short-term and long-term leave.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of movement by Congress to pass earned sick leave bills that have been introduced, and because Michigan now has a preemption law prohibiting localities from enacting earned sick leave on their own, Michigan should establish earned sick leave statewide.<sup>11</sup>

Five states and Washington, DC have sick leave laws. In 2011, Connecticut became the first state to enact such a law, and California and Massachusetts followed suit with laws that took effect in July 2015. Oregon's law took effect in January 2016 and Vermont's law will begin in January 2017.<sup>12</sup> Massachusetts' law was enacted through a ballot initiative, while earned sick leave laws in the other states and Washington, DC were enacted through legislation.<sup>13</sup>

In Michigan, both legislative chambers have bills pending that would require all employers to provide earned sick leave at a rate of one hour for every 30 hours worked, up to 40 hours per year for employees of a small business (ten employees or less) and up to 70 hours annually for all other workers. The bills have strong public support: A recent poll shows 86% of Michigan voters agree that every worker should be able to earn sick days in order to take time off without losing pay, and 83% would be supportive of the Legislature passing a bill that would allow workers to earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked.

Michigan currently has a preemption law that prohibits localities from enacting their own earned leave laws, underscoring the need to do this on the statewide level. Our state ought to follow the initiative of the five states and Washington, DC that have already passed such laws, and do what is right for Michigan workers and their families, businesses and the public.

### Earned paid sick days benefit our economy and our public health.

- People who are able to stay home when they're sick prevent the spread of illness and keep us all healthier.
- When parents can take time off, long-term health outcomes improve for themselves and their loved ones.
- Having earned paid sick leave for all workers improves the health of individuals, children and families, and the public at large.

## ENDNOTES

1. Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of the 2012-2014 National Health Interview Survey and the 2014 American Community Survey.
2. Ibid.
3. Oxfam America, *Hard Work, Hard Lives: Survey Exposes Harsh Reality Faced by Low-Wage Workers in the US*, 2013, as referenced in Ben-Ishai, Liz, *Access to Paid Leave: An Overlooked Aspect of Economic & Social Inequality*, Center for Law and Social Policy, April 14, 2014. ([www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/2014-04-09-Inequities-and-Paid-Leave-Brief\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/2014-04-09-Inequities-and-Paid-Leave-Brief_FINAL.pdf))
4. For more on this topic, see Babcock, Elizabeth, *Using Brain Science to Design New Pathways Out of Poverty*, Crittenton Women's Union, 2014. ([www.liveworkthrive.org/research\\_and\\_tools/reports\\_and\\_publications/EF\\_Report](http://www.liveworkthrive.org/research_and_tools/reports_and_publications/EF_Report))
5. Family Values at Work, *Voices from the Front Lines: Real Stories of American Families Living Without Paid Leave—and Glimpses of a Brighter Future*, June 2014. ([http://familyvaluesatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FVAW-2014-0005\\_FINAL\\_4web\\_spreads.pdf](http://familyvaluesatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FVAW-2014-0005_FINAL_4web_spreads.pdf))
6. Appelbaum, E., R. Milkman, L. Elliot and T. Kroeger, *Good for Business? Connecticut's Paid Sick Leave Law*, Center for Economic Policy Research, March 2014. (<https://cepr.net/documents/good-for-buisness-2014-02-21.pdf>)
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Heymann, Jody and Hye Jin Rho, John Schmitt and Alison Earle, *Contagion Nation: A Comparison of Paid Sick Day Policies in 22 Countries*, Center for Economic Policy Research, May 2009. ([www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-2009-05.pdf](http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-2009-05.pdf))
11. One bill in Congress is the Healthy Families Act introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (CT). For more information on this bill, see National Partnership for Women and Families, *Fact Sheet: The Healthy Families Act*, February 2015. ([www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/the-healthy-families-act-fact-sheet.pdf](http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/the-healthy-families-act-fact-sheet.pdf))
12. A Better Balance, *Overview of Paid Sick Time Laws in the United States*, updated March 2, 2016. ([www.abetterbalance.org/web/images/stories/Documents/sickdays/factsheet/PSDchart.pdf](http://www.abetterbalance.org/web/images/stories/Documents/sickdays/factsheet/PSDchart.pdf); accessed on March 2, 2016.)
13. National Partnership for Women and Families, *State and Local Action on Paid Sick Days*, November 2014. ([www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/campaigns/psd/state-and-local-action-paid-sick-days.pdf](http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/campaigns/psd/state-and-local-action-paid-sick-days.pdf))

## Who Are the Michigan Workers Without Earned Sick Leave?

	Total	With Earned Sick Leave	Without Earned Sick Leave	
<b>GENDER</b>				
Male	2,004,399	1,129,685	874,714	44%
Female	1,937,575	1,091,085	846,490	44%
<b>RACE</b>				
White	3,108,278	1,772,869	1,335,409	43%
Black	463,764	248,206	215,558	46%
Asian	118,015	76,101	41,914	36%
Hispanic	175,960	79,236	96,724	55%
Other/Mixed	75,957	44,358	31,599	42%
<b>CLASS OF WORKER</b>				
Private Sector	3,540,299	1,897,656	1,642,643	46%
State and Local Government	401,675	323,113	78,562	20%
<b>SELECTED OCCUPATIONS WITH HIGH LEVELS OF WORKERS WITHOUT SICK LEAVE</b>				
Service occupations	682,639	224,397	458,242	67%
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	280,711	129,314	151,397	54%
Production, transportation and material moving	681,886	331,292	350,594	51%
Sales and office	911,663	504,843	406,820	45%
Education, legal, community service, arts and media	390,871	274,705	116,166	30%
<b>HOURS WORKED</b>				
Less than 35	949,052	205,576	743,476	78%
35-39	271,718	142,949	128,769	47%
40 or more	2,721,204	1,872,244	848,960	31%
<b>TOTAL WORKFORCE</b>	<b>3,941,974</b>	<b>2,220,770</b>	<b>1,721,204</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>ANNUAL EARNINGS (Full-Time, Year-Round Workers Only)</b>				
Less than \$15,000	137,902	41,537	96,365	70%
\$15,000 - \$34,999	829,640	483,392	346,248	42%
\$35,000 - \$64,999	978,632	736,266	242,366	25%
\$65,000 or more	702,942	577,944	124,998	18%
<b>TOTAL FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND WORKFORCE</b>	<b>2,649,116</b>	<b>1,839,140</b>	<b>809,976</b>	<b>31%</b>

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of the 2012-2014 National Health Interview Survey and the 2014 American Community Survey