



## **About the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act**

Everyone gets sick, but not everyone is able to earn paid sick days off from work. More than two in five Rhode Islanders cannot earn a single paid sick day to use to care for themselves or a loved one.<sup>1</sup>

### **What It Does**

The Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act allows all Rhode Island workers to earn paid sick and safe time.

- Workers earn one hour of sick and safe time for every 30 hours they work
- Workers can earn a maximum of 56 hours (Seven eight-hour days) each year
- There is a 90 waiting period after s/he is hired before a worker can use earned sick and safe time
- If a worker uses more than three earned sick and safe days, an employer can ask for verification
- Workers can use earned sick and safe time to recover from illness, seek preventive care, take care of a sick family member or escape from and address domestic violence
- Employers already providing sick days above these minimum standards don't need change their policies

### **Why Having Access to Earned Sick and Safe Leave Is Important**

**Paid sick and safe days will:**

**Make a big difference for working families.** In Rhode Island, more than 40 percent of private sector workers or nearly 170,000 people lack paid sick days. These are disproportionately low-income workers.

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<sup>1</sup> National Partnership for Women and Families:

<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/campaigns/psd/rhode-island.pdf>

**Provide essential basic economic security.** Without this protection, an illness or an incident of domestic violence can cost working families a job or severely affect their ability to support themselves. No one should have to choose between taking care of their health and feeding their family.

**Improve public health.** Workers who lack earned sick days are more likely to report to work sick, which spreads disease. Food service, personal care, and childcare are industries where few workers have paid sick days.

**Lower health care costs.** Without time off to seek care, workers delay care and rely on emergency rooms, raising the cost of healthcare for all of us.

**Support victims escaping domestic violence.** Without this protection, an already terrifying situation can easily become a financial disaster for a family.

**Reduce employee turnover.** Workers who have the ability to earn sick and safe leave stay in their jobs longer. This reduces the cost of hiring and training new workers, and increases productivity.

**Support business and economic growth.** Business owners in places that have already implemented earned paid sick days laws are supportive of the policy. For example, a year and a half after implementation of Connecticut's earned paid sick days law, three-quarters of surveyed employers expressed support for the policy.<sup>2</sup>

**Puts Rhode Island on the leading edge of family friendly policies.** Cities and states across the country are learning that earned paid sick days are critical to build healthy communities. Rhode Island would be joining 31 cities and seven states that have already passed earned sick days policies, including the adjoining states of Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

**Be supported by constituents.** In national surveys, more than 80 percent of voters want workers to be able to earn sick time. In Massachusetts, a similar bill passed as a referendum with nearly 60 percent of the vote, despite active opposition. In 2016, earned sick days referenda passed in Washington and Arizona.

*The Rhode Island Earned Sick Days Campaign is supported by groups including AARP, Rhode Island Center for Justice, Economic Progress Institute, Fuerza Laboral, Jobs with Justice, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women, Rhode Island Working Families, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence, RI SEIU State Council, SEIU 32BJ-District 615, District 1199 SEIU New England, Teamsters Local 251, UNITE HERE-Local 26, United Nurses and Allied Professionals and Women's Fund of RI. We are united to ensure passage of a statewide measure to allow workers to care for themselves and their families without fear of lost income or job loss.*

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<sup>2</sup> Center for Economic and Policy Research: <http://cepr.net/documents/good-for-buisness-2014-02-21.pdf>