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CONTACT: Anthony Coley (Kennedy)
(202) 224-2633
Bryan DeAngelis (Dodd)
(202) 224-5372

**Summary of legislation included.

**KENNEDY AND DODD CHAMPION PAID SICK DAYS LEGISLATION FOR
AMERICA'S WORKING FAMILIES**

WASHINGTON, DC— Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Christopher Dodd yesterday evening introduced the Healthy Families Act, which will allow American workers to earn paid sick days to care for themselves and their families without risking their jobs.

Now more than ever, workers are struggling to balance the demands of their jobs with the needs of their families. Yet almost half of today's private sector workforce doesn't have a single paid sick day—including 79% of low-wage workers. This needed legislation will enable workers to earn one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours (7 days) in a year. Workers will be able to use this time to care for themselves and their families, receive preventive or diagnostic treatment, or seek help if they are victims of domestic violence.

Especially in this time of heightened awareness about the spread of flu and other diseases, allowing workers to stay home when they are sick is a critical public health issue. Business will also benefit, increasing their productivity and reducing the \$180 billion lost annually to "presenteeism," (when employees come to work sick and infect others) and nearly \$2 billion lost due to employee turnover. Additionally, the bill exempts employers with less than 15 employees, and allows employers to require documentation from workers who request leave longer than three days.

Senator Kennedy, Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, said, "Every worker has had to miss days of work because of illness. Every child gets sick and needs a parent at home to take care of them. And all hardworking Americans deserve the chance to take care of their families without putting their jobs or their health on the line. I urge all of my colleagues to join in supporting the Healthy Families Act."

Senator Dodd said, "No American should be forced to sacrifice their health simply because they can't afford to miss a day of work," said Dodd. "I fought long and hard to give American workers the ability to take extended unpaid leave to care for themselves or a loved one. My home state of Connecticut is already working to guarantee paid sick days, but this is a right that should be afforded to all Americans. I'm prepared to fight again to give them the freedom to take a day off if they need to tend to a sick family member or their own health without losing a day's pay."

A summary of the legislation is below.

Supporting America's Working Families: The Healthy Families Act

Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro

In this turbulent economy, families are strapped for cash and crunched for time. Now more than ever, workers are struggling to balance the demands of their jobs and their families. When a sickness or health problem arises, these challenges become insurmountable.

Unfortunately, almost half of all private sector workers don't have a single paid sick day that they can use to care for themselves or a sick family member. For these workers, taking a day off to address a health issue means losing a paycheck, or even putting their jobs on the line. Without paid sick days, too many Americans are forced to make impossible choices every day between the jobs they need and the families they love.

The Healthy Families Act allows workers to earn paid sick time to address medical needs and care for family members.

- Workers can earn up to 56 hours (7 days) of paid sick time. Workers earn 1 hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked.
- Workers can use this time to stay home and get well when they are ill, to care for a sick family member, to obtain preventative or diagnostic treatment, or to seek help if they are victims of domestic violence.

The Act provides these important protections while addressing business concerns.

- Small employers with fewer than 15 employees are exempt from the Act.
- Employers that already provide this leave will not have to change their current policies at all, as long as their existing leave can be used for the same purposes described in the Act.
- Employers can require workers to provide documentation supporting any request for leave longer than 3 consecutive days.

The Act will benefit workers, business, and our economy by reducing the spread of disease, decreasing employee turnover, and improving productivity.

- "Presenteeism" – when sick workers come to work and infect their colleagues rather than stay at home – costs our national economy \$180 billion annually in lost productivity. For employers, this costs an average of \$255 per employee per year, and exceeds the cost of absenteeism and medical and disability benefits.
- Lack of paid sick days results in higher employee turnover, especially for low-wage workers. This turnover costs employers nearly \$2 billion annually.

- Children who are sick recover faster if parents are present – this can help lower healthcare expenditures.

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