

Ellen Bravo, Executive Director of Family Values @ Work
Testimony for HELP Hearing on Economic Security for Working Women
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Thank you so much, Senator Harkin and Senator Alexander, for hosting this hearing and inviting me to testify on economic security for working women.

My name is Ellen Bravo, and I have been working for years to advance policies that value families at work, first as director of 9to5, National Association of Working Women, and for the last decade as director of Family Values @ Work Consortium. In 1995 I was appointed by Congress to the bipartisan Commission on Leave to study the impact of the Family and Medical Leave Act on employers and employees. I have written several books and numerous articles on working women and testified before federal, state and local legislative bodies. For a number of years I taught a masters level class on Family-Friendly Workplace Practices at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Family Values @ Work is a network of coalitions in 21 states that bring together a wide range of local groups -- working women and men, restaurant owners and restaurant workers, feminists and faith leaders, those who want to end poverty and end asthma, advocates for workers, children, seniors and racial justice, LGBT activists and public health professionals, and many business owners. Together, we have been making strides toward establishing economic security for families through paid sick days and paid family leave policies.

While many employers already offer the policies we seek, millions of workers are still operating in workplaces designed for men with wives at home full time.

In 2010, nearly three quarters of children had both parents or their only parent working, a 13 percent increase since the mid-1980's when FMLA was first drafted.¹ Women are the primary or co-breadwinners for nearly two-thirds of the nation's families, so a woman's income loss during maternity leave or even a few days with a sick child has significant economic consequences for her family.²

Not having these policies in place also holds back our economy. For stronger families, stronger businesses, a stronger country, we must make sure that working women have opportunities to succeed as providers *and* as caregivers. Policies like paid sick days and family and medical leave

¹ Houser, L. and Vartanian, T. (January 2012). "Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses and the Public," retrieved May 15, 2014 from <http://smlr.rutgers.edu/paymatters-cwwreport-january2012>

² Boushey, H. (2009). The New Breadwinners. In H. Boushey and A. O'Leary (Eds.), *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything*. Retrieved May 15 2013 from <http://shriverreport.org/special-report/a-womans-nation-changes-everything/>

insurance are small steps that can create a big difference in making us the nation we set out to be.

I'm here to speak on behalf of all the working women, men and families who are involved in this important work in the states. It is their voices and commitment that are the center of this movement – and this progress – that we are seeing.

They are women like Shelby Ramirez in Denver, whose father and daughter each had surgery within days of each other. Shelby took unpaid time from work to care for them. For doing what a good daughter and mother does, Shelby nearly wound up homeless and had to pawn the one thing of value she owned, a ring given to her by her father many years earlier.³

I speak also for Rhiannon Broschat who lives in Chicago.⁴ On a day this winter when the Chicago Public Schools closed because it was too cold to be safe for children to go to schools, Rhiannon had no one to care for her special needs son. For safeguarding her child as a good mother does, Rhiannon was 'separated' from the company for 'abusing' the attendance policy. What this means is that Rhiannon was fired from a very profitable company for refusing to leave her son home alone.

Women and families in this country will not have real economic security until their earnings and their jobs are protected when they or a family member needs care. The lack of modest policies like those that exist in the rest of the world forces women like Shelby and Rhiannon and millions of others to make an impossible choice between the jobs they need and the family that needs them.

This goes against the core family values that our country believes in – across party lines and geographies.

Our coalitions are also working to ensure that pregnant workers can have a stool to sit on, water to drink or sufficient bathroom breaks without losing their job. New York, New Jersey, and a number of other places have passed such bills with bipartisan support. We are working on solutions to another serious set of issues – how to ensure people have enough hours and predictable schedules as businesses seek staffing solutions that can also meet their needs.

However, my testimony today will focus on the need for paid sick days and family and medical leave insurance.

Twenty-one years ago, Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act with bipartisan support. The FMLA provides up to 12 weeks unpaid time for the occasional longer term leave people need to care for a new baby or for a serious personal or family illness. It applies to those

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ofpe3PZXRgM&feature=youtu.be>

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEB1kGP_ghg

who work in a firm of 50 or more, have been on the job at least a year and work at least 25 hours a week on average for the same employer.

FMLA was a great first step for families – but as our economy and our families have changed, so too must our laws. The FMLA leaves out more than 40 percent of the workforce.⁵ It does not include routine illness or preventive care. While an employee covered by FMLA could take leave to care for her father if he had a heart attack, that same employee could be fired for taking Dad to the doctor to get his cholesterol down and prevent a heart attack in the first place.

Furthermore, many of those who are covered are unable to take the time they need because it is unpaid. In 2012, two and a half times as many people as in 2000 needed leave and were eligible but didn't take it, mostly because they couldn't afford it. Many others went back from leave too early, without fully recovering.⁶

What is needed? We need to expand the FMLA to cover those currently excluded.⁷

We also need public policies like the **Healthy Families Act (H.R.1286/S.631)** that address short-term, routine illness and the preventive care that people need every year. The Healthy Families Act, introduced by Senator Harkin, would allow workers to earn paid sick days they can use to care for their own illness or that of a loved one, or to deal with the aftermath of sexual or domestic violence.

In addition, we need a policy like the **FAMILY Act (H.R.3712/S.1810)**, introduced by Senator Gillibrand, to establish a family and medical leave insurance fund. By pooling small contributions from employees and employers, this fund would enable those needing leave to have some vital income during an already challenging time.

Consider these facts related to the lack of access to paid sick days:

More than 41 million workers in the U.S., nearly 40 percent of the workforce, do not earn paid sick days.⁸ Millions more are not allowed to use the sick time they earn to care for a sick family member. The numbers are much lower for low-wage workers and particularly those with the closest contact with the public, such as those who work in food preparation and service, and those in personal care.⁹

⁵ Klerman, J. et al, (updated September 2013). "Family and Medical Leave in 2012, Technical Report," Abt Associates, Inc., <http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/fmla/FMLA-2012-Technical-Report.pdf>

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Jorgensen, H. and Appelbaum, E, Center for Economic and Policy Research, (April 2014). "Expanding Family and Medical Leave to Small Firms, <http://www.cepr.net/documents/fmla-small-firms-2014-04.pdf>

⁸ Williams, C. and Gault, B., Institute for Women's Policy Research (March 2014). "Paid Sick Days Access in the United States: Differences by Race/Ethnicity, Occupation, Earnings, and Work Schedule," retrieved May 15, 2014 from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-access-in-the-united-states-differences-by-race-ethnicity-occupation-earnings-and-work-schedule>

⁹ *Ibid.*

Nearly one quarter of adults in the US have been fired or threatened with job loss for taking time off to recover from illness or care for a sick loved one.¹⁰ Even losing a few days' pay can be devastating. For low-income families, going just 3.5 days without wages is equivalent to losing a month's groceries.¹¹

The Center for Disease Control found that more than 2.5 million cases of foodborne illness each year were caused by sick restaurant workers contaminating food while they are at work.¹² During the H1N1 epidemic, 7 million people caught the virus from co-workers who came to the job while sick.¹³

Health conditions go undiagnosed because workers without paid sick days are less likely to get basic health and cancer screenings.¹⁴ More than one in four parents of a child with asthma (28 percent) has missed one of their child's medical appointments because they could not get time off work.¹⁵ Injuries on the job are also more common when workers go to the job ill.¹⁶

The human cost of sick days is also borne by businesses and society.

Presenteeism, (the cost of employees' lower productivity when working sick) adds up to \$160 billion annually – considerably more than the cost of absenteeism.¹⁷

The US spends \$1.1 billion in unnecessary emergency department costs because people can't take time off to see a doctor during business hours and either go straight to ERs or wait until conditions worsen and an ER becomes necessary.¹⁸

¹⁰ Smith, T. and Kim, J. National Opinion Research Center, (June 2010). "Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences," retrieved May 15, 2014. <http://www.publicwelfare.org/resources/DocFiles/psd2010final.pdf>

¹¹ Gould, E. et al., Economic Policy Institute, (June 2011). "The Need for Paid Sick Days," retrieved May 15, 2014 from http://www.epi.org/publication/the_need_for_paid_sick_days/

¹² Painter, J., et al. (2013, March). "Attribution of Foodborne Illnesses, Hospitalizations, and Deaths to Food Commodities by using Outbreak Data, United States, 1998–2008." Centers for Disease Control. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/19/3/pdfs/11-1866.pdf>.

¹³ Drago, R. and Miller, K. (2010 February). "Sick at Work: Infected Employees in the Workplace During the H1N1 Pandemic." Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/sick-at-work-infected-employees-in-the-workplace-during-the-h1n1-pandemic/at_download/file.

¹⁴ Peipins LA, Soman A, Berkowitz Z, White MC. "The lack of paid sick leave as a barrier to cancer screening and medical care-seeking: results from the National Health Interview Survey." *BMC Public Health* 2012;12(1):520.

¹⁵ Smith, LA et al. (2002, September). "Employment barriers among welfare recipients and applicants with chronically ill children." Published in *American Journal of Public Health*, Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12197972>.

¹⁶ Asfaw, A., et al. (2012, September). "Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries." *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(9), e59-e64. Retrieved May 18, 2014, from <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300482>.

¹⁷ Kalorama Information (2009, October). "The Market for Wellness Programs and Their Impact on Pharmaceutical, Diagnostic and Device Product Markets." Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.kaloramainformation.com/about/release.asp?id=1463>.

¹⁸ Miller, K et al. (2011, November). "Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits." Institute for Women's Policy Research, Retrieved May 18, 2014 from

The United States is the only country that does not provide paid sick leave for a worker undergoing a 50-day cancer treatment.¹⁹ And we are one of only three countries that do not provide paid sick days for a worker missing 5 days of work due to the flu.²⁰

The figures on lack of access to affordable family and medical leave are also stark:

The United States is one of three countries to guarantee no paid maternity leave. The other countries are Papua New Guinea and Oman.²¹ Only 12 percent of private sector employees have paid family leave from an employer.²²

That lack of pay can have disastrous impact on a family's economic security. Studies show that seven percent of people who filed for bankruptcy cited the birth of a child as the cause.²³ A significant number of bankruptcies also happen after a worker misses two or more weeks of work due to illness.²⁴

Forty-eight percent of family caregivers who have to take time off to care for a family member lost income during that time.²⁵ And the number of caregivers is growing as the population ages. By 2030, the number of Americans over 65 will be 70 million—double today's 35 million.²⁶ Nearly two-thirds of Americans under the age of 60 expect to be responsible for the care of an elder relative within the next ten years, and by 2020 about 40 percent of the workforce will be caring for older parents.²⁷

http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-and-health-cost-savings-from-reduced-emergency-department-visits/at_download/file.

¹⁹ Heymann, J. et al. (2009, May). "Contagion Nation: A Comparison of Paid Sick Day Policies in 22 Countries." Center for Economic and Policy Research. Retrieved May 18, 2014, from <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-2009-05.pdf>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Addati, L. et al. "Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world. Appendix II: Key national statutory provisions on maternity leave, by region, 2013." International Labour Organization, 2014. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf.

²² Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table 32. Leave benefits: Access, private industry workers, National Compensation Survey, March 2013. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2013/ownership/private/table21a.htm>.

²³ The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (Spring/Summer 2001). "The Future of Children." Retrieved May 18, 2014 from http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/11_01_FullJournal.pdf.

²⁴ Boushey, H and Glynn S (2012 April). "The Effects of Paid Family and Medical Leave on Employment Stability and Economic Security," Center for American Progress. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/04/pdf/BousheyEmploymentLeave1.pdf>.

²⁵ Aumann, K (2008). "The Elder Care Study: Everyday Realities and Wishes for Change, Families and Work Institute." Retrieved May 18, 2014 from http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/elder_care.pdf

²⁶ A Profile of Older Americans (2011), Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2011/docs/2011profile.pdf.

²⁷ Lerman, R and Schmidt, S. "Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century," The Urban Institute. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/herman/reports/futurework/conference/trends/trendsi.htm>.

Both paid sick days and family and medical leave insurance are common sense solutions to the dilemma our nation faces: the very thing that makes us good parents or children to our parents often jeopardizes our ability to make ends meet.

Cities and States are Leading the Way

My children and I were part of helping to win unpaid Family and Medical Leave in Wisconsin in 1988. That win, along with similar ones in many other states, paved the way for the national bill in 1993. They helped disprove the predictions of job loss and business closings – family leave in fact strengthened families and businesses by helping people keep their jobs and their earnings. It lowers turnover costs, boosts productivity and morale.

Now states and municipalities are developing models for both family and medical leave insurance and paid sick days.

The 1995 Commission on Leave unanimously recommended that states “consider voluntarily establishing or expanding existing temporary disability insurance programs to provide wage replacement for periods of family and medical leave.”²⁸

Research conducted for that Commission found that nearly one in ten (9 percent) of leave-takers had to rely on public assistance to support themselves while on leave. That number was more than one in five (20.9 percent) for those earning \$20,000 or less.²⁹ The overall figure increased in the most recent survey (9.8 percent).³⁰

In 2002, California became the first state to attempt to make family leave affordable. Implemented in 2004, the new law expanded the state’s existing temporary disability insurance program – just as the Commission had recommended – to help ensure working families had income to rely on during family leave. Those needing family leave may take up to six weeks at 55 percent of their pay with a cap of \$533 a week in 2013. New Jersey followed in 2009. Benefits there are typically two-thirds of the last eight weeks of pay, up to \$584 a week for up to six weeks.

Just last year, Rhode Island became the third state to pass such a measure. Together these three states have brought access to family leave insurance programs to more than 17 million people. Other states are on their way, with Washington having passed and hoping to have funding to implement the program next year. In New York State, legislators are moving a bill forward, and in Vermont and Connecticut, study commissions are laying the groundwork for legislation. Colorado has a bill pending and a number of other states are considering similar

²⁸ A Workable Balance: Report to Congress on Family and Medical Leave Policies, Department of Labor, 1996 <https://archive.org/stream/workablebalancer00unit#page/198/mode/2up/search/Policy+Directions>

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Klerman, J. et al, (updated September 2013). “Family and Medical Leave in 2012, Technical Report,” Abt Associates, Inc., <http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/fmla/FMLA-2012-Technical-Report.pdf>

action. **The State Paid Leave Fund, \$5 million in the Department of Labor budget, would be a significant boost to these programs.**

Economists, business owners and workers alike have confirmed the success of these programs. A recent Rutgers study shows that New Jersey's family leave insurance (FLI) program has saved businesses money by improving employee retention, decreasing turnover costs, and improving productivity.³¹ Despite "sky is falling" claims about the potential costs of FLI for business, research from *Unfinished Business*, a book on the success of California's program, shows employers reporting that a neutral or positive effect on employee productivity, profitability, and turnover; most employers coordinate their own benefits with the state's paid family leave program.³² Workers who took paid family or medical leave are more likely to return to the same employer, reducing turnover costs, which can range from nearly \$5,400 to more than \$18,000.³³

Most employees who used California's paid family leave program reported that leave had a positive effect on their ability to care for a child or ill family member (82.3%), allowed them to initiate breastfeeding (91.3%), had a positive effect on their ability to arrange child care (62.5%) and had a positive effect on an ill family member's health (86.5%).³⁴

In New Jersey, women who take paid leave after a child's birth are more likely to be employed the following year and report increased wages than women who do not take leave. Parents who took leave report lower levels of public assistance (about 40 percent less) in the year following their child's birth, when compared to those without paid leave.³⁵

Another benefit of family and medical leave insurance is that it increases men's role in caregiving by making it possible for them to be involved without the family taking a big financial hit.³⁶ In California, for example, fathers' leave-taking for bonding with a new child rose 12 percent from 2011 to 2012.

³¹ Houser, L and Vartanian, T. (2012 January). "Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses and the Public, A Report of the Center for Women and Work." Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://news.rutgers.edu/news-releases/2012/01/rutgers-study-finds-20120118#.U3ZiJ9JdXT0>.

³² Appelbaum, E and Milkman, R. (2011). "Leaves That Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences with Paid Family Leave in California." Center for Economic and Policy Research. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Houser, L and Vartanian, T. (2012 January). "Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses and the Public, A Report of the Center for Women and Work." Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://news.rutgers.edu/news-releases/2012/01/rutgers-study-finds-20120118#.U3ZiJ9JdXT0>.

³⁶ Appelbaum, E and Milkman, R. (2011). "Leaves That Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences with Paid Family Leave in California." Center for Economic and Policy Research. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>.

Paid family leave also promotes children’s wellbeing. Ensuring that new parents can take time to care for a newborn gives babies their best start in life. Four-fifths of respondents who took paid leaves reported they were better able to care for a new baby.³⁷ New mothers who take paid leave are more likely to take the minimum doctor-recommended six to eight weeks to recover from birth.³⁸ Newborns whose mothers take 12 weeks of leave are more likely to be breastfed, receive regular check-ups, and get critical immunizations.

An examination of more than two decades of data from 16 European countries showed that paid parental leave policies were associated with lower rates of infant and child mortality.³⁹

And paid family leave promotes the wellbeing and independence of seniors by enabling families to care for aging parents without fear of losing all their wages and allowing seniors to age in their homes instead of state facilities. This also saves taxpayer money.⁴⁰ When cared for by family members, patients in the hospital recover from illness and injury faster, leading to shorter hospital stays, improved health outcomes, and decreased health costs.⁴¹

Businesses support family and medical leave programs and replacement income provided by FMLI goes right back into the local economy, as workers spend it to help cover the basics. According to Herb Greenberg, founder and CEO of Caliper, a human resources consulting firm in New Jersey: “Family Leave Insurance ... has been a huge positive for Caliper. When you think about the cost of individuals leaving, the cost of seeking new employees, the cost of maybe hiring the wrong person, training them, etc., and you compare that to the pennies that Family Leave costs you—there is just no comparison in terms of the pure balance sheet.”⁴²

A survey for Small Business Majority found that six in 10 New York small business owners support a family and medical leave program with shared contributions from employers and employees.⁴³

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Gomby, D., & Pei, D. (2009). “Newborn Family Leave: Effects on Children, Parents, and Business.” David and Lucile Packard Foundation publication. Retrieved 4 January 2013, from http://www.packard.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/NFLA_fullreport_final.pdf.

³⁹ Ruhm, C., “Parent Leave and Child Health,” *Journal of Health Economics* 19, no. 6 (2000), 931-60

⁴⁰ Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2008 April). “Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce.” Retrieved May 18 2014 from <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2008/Retooling-for-an-Aging-America-Building-the-Health-Care-Workforce.aspx>.

⁴¹ Taylor, MRH and O’Connor, P. Resident parents and shorter hospital stay, National Children’s Hospital and Department of Paediatrics, Trinity College, Dublin. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://adc.bmj.com/content/64/2/274.full.pdf+html>.

⁴² Family Values @ Work. “From the Story Bank: Dr. Herb Greenberg’s Story.” <http://familyvaluesatwork.org/story/dr-herb-greenbergs>

⁴³ Small Business Majority (2013 December). “New York Small Businesses Support Publicly Administered Family and Medical Leave Insurance Pools.” Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.smallbusinessmajority.org/small-business-research/family-medical-leave/121213-NY-FML-report.php>.

Paid Sick Days

Working women also need to be able to take a day off when they or their kids are sick. Because of the momentum behind paid sick days policies, more than two million people previously uncovered now have that protection. Millions more can use those sick days to care for an ill family member and all can do so without being disciplined for using the time they have earned.

That means mothers are not losing grocery money when their kids get the flu; it means that workers are not going to work sick to spread the flu. A growing body of research affirms that these policies help strengthen families while having a positive or no negative effect on business profitability, productivity, performance and morale.

San Francisco was the first city with the law, followed by wins in DC, then Seattle and the state of Connecticut. 2013 saw paid sick days measures pass in Portland, New York City and Jersey City and an expansion to tipped workers in DC. Already this year Newark enacted paid sick days and New York City expanded its new laws. More wins are likely before the end of this year.

The combined impact on our economy, on our families and on businesses is worth noting.

First, economists say job retention policies like paid sick days help reduce unemployment and strengthen the economy,⁴⁴ and the local economies where paid sick days policies have been implemented are doing well. For instance, more than two in three businesses in San Francisco support their city's paid sick days law and six in seven employers report no negative impact on profitability.⁴⁵ The city experienced better job growth than five surrounding counties without earned sick time.⁴⁶ PriceWaterhouseCoopers ranked San Francisco as one of the top cities in the world to do business. Even the chief lobbyist against the bill in San Francisco told Businessweek it's "the best public policy for the least cost."⁴⁷

Since Connecticut enacted the first statewide paid sick days law, the Department of Labor reports that employment has grown in Connecticut's Leisure and Hospitality⁴⁸ and Education and Health Services⁴⁹ sectors, the two most impacted by the new law. A recent study by Eileen Appelbaum and Ruth Milkman showed more than three-quarters of Connecticut employers are

⁴⁴ Appelbaum, E and Golden, L. "Sick days for healthy recovery." April 29, 2011. Philadelphia Business Journal. <http://www.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/print-edition/2011/04/29/sick-days-for-healthy-recovery.html>.

⁴⁵ Drago, R and Lovell, V (2011 February). "San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcomes for Employers and Employees," Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/San-Fran-PSD>.

⁴⁶ Petro, J (2011 January). "Paid Sick Leave Does Not Harm Business Growth or Job Growth," Drum Major Institute for Public Policy. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from http://everybodybenefits.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Paid_Sick_Leave_Does_Not_Harm.pdf.

⁴⁷ Warren, J. "Cough If You Need Sick Leave," Businessweek. June 3, 2010. http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10_24/b4182033783036.htm.

⁴⁸ Industry Sector Employment (CES) – State of Connecticut, State of Connecticut Labor Market Information. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from <http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/SecEmp.asp#map8>.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

supportive of the law.⁵⁰ The authors found that the law had minimal effects on businesses. Typically businesses covered absent workers by assigning the work to other employees, a solution which has little effect on costs. Since the implementation of the paid sick days law, Connecticut employers saw decreases in the spread of illnesses and increases in morale, among many more effects.⁵¹

Administrators of the programs also confirm that they are not a burden on business. Donna Levitt, Division Manager, San Francisco Office of Labor Standards Enforcement, told Connecticut legislators in 2011, “Since [the PSLO took effect in February of 2007,] we have heard relatively few complaints or problems with respect to implementation of the law I am not aware of any employer in San Francisco who has reduced staff or made any other significant change in their business as a result of the sick leave ordinance.”⁵²

Earned sick days strengthen families. The Healthy Families Act – and local and state bills -- would make it easier for workers to be good employees and good parents and will let children lead healthier lives, be more successful in school and be better prepared for the future. Seniors will also benefit when adult children can afford to take them to the doctor or care for them during an illness. Today, as a hospital administrator in Atlanta testified, hospital hallways are often lined with seniors whose adult children cannot leave work to pick them up after a test or minor procedure.

When their parents are able to care for them at home, sick children get better sooner and reduce the risk of spreading the illness to their classmates,⁵³ and parents with paid sick days are less likely to send a sick child to school.

Sick days also let parents keep their children healthy by getting them to doctor visits for detection, treatment, and vaccinations. Earned sick days protect public health and will make our country a safer, healthier place to live.

Small businesses support earned sick days because it's good for their bottom line. The real experiences of small businesses show earned sick days result in reduced turnover, which saves businesses money. Jim Houser, owner of Houser Automotive Clinic in Portland, Oregon, says that because employees know “we care about their health and well-being, they’re loyal to us in return.”⁵⁴ The average tenure for his employees is 18 years, bringing enormous savings in

⁵⁰ Kroeger, T, “Is Paid Sick Leave Good for Business?” Center for Economic and Policy Research, January 6, 2014. <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/cepr-blog/is-paid-sick-leave-good-for-business>.

⁵¹ Appelbaum, E and Milkman, R. (2014 January). “Good for Business? The Case of Paid Sick Leave in Connecticut. Retrieved May 18, 2014 from http://www.cepr.net/documents/presentations/CT_PSD_Jan_2014.pptx.

⁵² <http://cga.ct.gov/2011/LABdata/Tmy/2011SB-00913-R000301-Donna%20Levitt-City%20of%20San%20Francisco-TMY.PDF>

⁵³ Heymann, J. “We Can Afford to Give Parents a Break,” Washington Post, May 14, 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/12/AR2006051201817.html>.

⁵⁴ Family Values @ Work and Main Street Alliance, (2011). “How Your Business Can Benefit from Paid Sick Days,” retrieved May 15, 2014 from <http://familyvaluesatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Business-Outreach-Trifold-Brochure.pdf>

recruitment and training costs. “Any business person can calculate what that means for overall savings,” says Houser.

Paid sick days boost businesses and the economy overall by keeping money in people’s pockets. Freddy Castiblanco, owner of Terraza 7 Train Café in Queens, recognizes that other employers’ workers are his customers. “If we protect the salaries, if we give job stability, we are going to protect the purchasing power of potential customers,” he says. “If you give me tax cuts, I won’t be able to generate any more jobs. What really creates jobs in my community is customers.”⁵⁵

Conclusion

Recently one of our leaders in Maryland, Melissa Broome, spent a week at Johns Hopkins Hospital with her four-year-old son, Owen. Both Melissa and her husband had paid sick days that allowed them to be at his side so they could, as Melissa put it, hold his hand and whisper in his ear every time he was poked and prodded. Fortunately, Owen will be fine. But it broke Melissa’s heart to see how many children were alone during the day. When they took Owen for a walk through the halls in a red wagon, he didn’t ask why so many of the kids were bald. But he did ask, “Where are that boy’s mommy and daddy?He shouldn’t be all by himself.”⁵⁶ Talking to a parent in the family kitchen one evening, Melissa learned that this woman’s 18-month-old daughter was about to be discharged with a feeding tube. Her day care won’t take children with feeding tubes. “I don't know how I'm going to be able to keep my job,” the woman said. “I don't know what I'm going to do.”

It may be very difficult to cure the diseases that afflict these children. But it is not difficult to institute policies like paid sick days and family and medical leave insurance so that their parents can hold their hands and whisper in their ears.

We thank you for holding this hearing today and hope that you will champion these policies -- not as a favor to women but as a way to strengthen families, businesses and the economy.

⁵⁵ Community Service Society of New York (March 2013,) “Latino Workers Can’t Afford to Get Sick,” retrieved May 15, 2014 from http://b.3cdn.net/nycss/8edff06bac4f0ab330_4dm6b625v.pdf

⁵⁶ Melissa Broome, “Choosing Between Your Child and Your Job,” May 16, 2014 Baltimore Sun http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2014-05-16/news/bs-ed-family-leave-20140517_1_johns-hopkins-children-owen-day-care#.U3jS9jnS6PI.email