

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 9, 2008

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NEWS

Assembly Committee Approves Paid Sick Days Legislation

*Vote Comes on the Heels of New Report that Finds
Workers & Employers in State Would Benefit from Law*

Sacramento, CA – The Assembly Labor and Employment Committee passed the Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act today by a vote of 6-2. Introduced by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (D-San Francisco) in February, AB 2716 would allow workers to earn paid sick days that can be used to recover from illness, care for a sick family member, or recover from domestic violence or sexual assault. In conjunction with the hearing, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) released a study which finds that AB 2716 will have real benefits for both employers and working families in the state. The bill will be heard next by the Assembly Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, April 15. If passed by the legislature and signed into law, California would be the first state in the nation to require employers to provide paid sick days.

“Our research shows that it is possible to provide Californians with paid sick days without negatively impacting California employers. In fact, AB 2716 will save employers \$2.3 million per year, mainly from reduced turnover costs,” said Vicky Lovell, Ph.D., Director of Employment and Work/Life Programs at IWPR and author of *Valuing Good Health in California: The Costs and Benefits of the Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act of 2008*.

“Healthy workers create a healthy economy,” said Assemblywoman Ma. “AB 2716 will benefit not only workers, but California employers through the cost savings of maintaining a healthy workplace.”

The new IWPR study uses data collected by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Health and Human Services, California Employment Development Department and US Census Bureau to evaluate the likely impact of AB 2716. Among its main findings:

- Right now, half of workers with paid sick days do not take any days off for illness in a given year.
- Workers covered by the Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act of 2008 would, on average, use fewer than two days of paid sick time per year for their own medical needs, excluding maternity leave.

- Workers covered by the Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act of 2008 would, on average, use just one day of sick time per year for family care and doctor visits.
- If the Act becomes law, California employers would pay just \$1.3 million annually for wages and associated costs to workers who take leave under the Act.
- If the Act becomes law, savings to employers would total \$2.3 million annually, mainly from reduced costs of turnover.
- If the Act becomes law, workers and their families would experience lower expenditures for health-care services, saving \$7 million annually.

Right now, nearly six million Californians lack paid sick days. Those workers can lose a day's wages or even risk their jobs if they stay home to recover from illness or care for their children. Alternatively, they may go to work sick which poses a hazard to public health as they can pass flu or other diseases to co-workers.

The California Work and Family Coalition, including advocacy organizations, health professionals and public health officials, is promoting passage of AB 2716. The bill is co-sponsored by the California Labor Federation and the California Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN).

"This law is crucial to public health because it allows all workers to follow common-sense advice from their doctors and public health agencies. Doctors tell patients to stay home and recover; schools tell parents to keep sick kids at home; the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that all workers with the flu should stay home; and California State rules try to keep sick restaurant and health care workers away from clients," said Dr. Rajiv Bhatia, the Director of Occupational and Environmental Health for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, who is testifying at today's hearing. "Without paid sick days for all workers, we can't guarantee this common sense prevention will occur."

AB 2716 would allow workers to earn one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours of paid work. Workers in smaller firms would be able to take up to 40 hours or 5 days of leave in each calendar year, and all other workers would be able to take up to 72 hours or 9 days of leave per calendar year.

San Francisco became the first city in the United States to implement paid sick days in 2006, and lawmakers in the District of Columbia passed a paid sick days law this year. Paid sick days legislation is pending in Massachusetts and Ohio.

The IWPR report can be downloaded at www.iwpr.org. For more information about paid sick days legislation in California, see www.paid sick days CA.org.

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