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**New Report Shows Significant Public Health Benefits of Paid Sick Days
Legislation**

Experts Announce New Data as California Assembly Labor Committee Prepares to Vote on Bill

SACRAMENTO – Public health experts and workers rights groups gathered at the State Capitol today to emphasize the significant public health benefits of a proposed law that would allow California workers to earn paid sick days. The groups joined Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (D-San Francisco), author of the Healthy Workplaces, Healthy Families Act (AB 1000) to support the legislation on the day it successfully passed the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee. AB 1000 will allow workers to earn paid sick days for personal illness, to care for a sick family member, or to recover from domestic violence or sexual assault.

Today, public health experts shared findings from a newly released study by the Human Impact Partners (HIP) and the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH), which found that food handling by sick workers contributes to a substantial share of food-borne disease outbreaks in California. According to Dr. Rajiv Bhatia MD, MPH, Director of Environmental Health for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, “Between 2003 and 2007, California had 67 reported food-borne disease outbreaks occurring in restaurants, schools, day care centers and hospitals that were traced back to an ill food service worker. These outbreaks were responsible for 1,955 cases of illness.” In one case, an employee with confirmed norovirus (stomach flu) illness was implicated in an outbreak of the disease at a restaurant and infected 80 people.

The new research data supports findings of the HIP and SFDPH’s 2008 study “Health Impact Assessment of the California Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act” that providing paid sick days for all workers would improve the health of all Californians. “Our research indicates that guaranteeing paid sick days is a commonsense policy that will positively impact the health of anyone who eats or works in restaurants, of families with kids in school or day care, and of seniors who receive care at home or in nursing homes,” said Jonathan Heller of Human Impact Partners, one of the authors of the research.

Guaranteeing a minimum number of paid sick days is a prevention strategy that protects the health of all Californians,” said Ellen Wu, Executive Director of California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, “When workers can take needed time off without the loss of pay or fear of losing a job, there is decreased risk of an outbreak of disease, opportunities for preventive care, and ultimately, reduced health-care spending.”

“We are not robots. We all get sick, our family members and loved ones get sick,” said Assemblywoman Fiona Ma. “Millions of California’s workers are forced to go to work sick because

they can't take a day off to rest and recuperate. When we go to school or work sick we put others at risk. AB 1000 enhances public health and supports the economic security of California's families."

"No one should have to choose between their job and their health, but every day, too many California workers are forced to make that difficult decision," said Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation, which is a co-sponsor of the bill. " AB 1000 is much-needed legislation that would finally ensure sick workers can stay home without fear of losing wages or even their jobs. Guaranteeing paid sick days for all Californians is a surefire way to put money back in workers' pockets and help working families stay afloat in this difficult economy."

Workers shared stories about how a lack of paid sick days was affecting their already fragile economic security and urged lawmakers to pass AB 1000. "I am a single mother with three children. I work 6 days a week and have no paid sick days," said Kathleen Martinez, an Antioch resident and Parent Voices member who works full-time at a restaurant. "I have spent many sleepless nights worrying about taking days off from work when I get sick or when my children get sick. In this bad economy, I can't afford to miss work and I have to show up to prove that I am a good worker. It's an unfair choice."

The California Work and Family Coalition, including advocacy organizations, health professionals and public health officials, is promoting passage of AB 1000. The bill is co-sponsored by the California Labor Federation and the California Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN).

Nearly six million Californians – more than two in five workers in the state – do not get any paid sick days. Going to work sick creates unhealthy workplaces and puts the health of our families and communities at risk. According to a 2008 Field Research Corporation poll, 73 percent of California voters support a law guaranteeing workers a minimum number of paid sick days. In recent years, a movement for paid sick days has grown at the local, state and federal level across the country. If passed, the paid sick days legislation would make California the first state in the nation to allow workers to earn paid sick days. For more information, visit www.paidicksickdaysCA.org

To access the paid sick days and health research, visit: www.humanimpact.org/PSD.

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